The Little Flower and the Blessed Sacrament

Rev. Joseph Husslein, S.J.

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"King, whom I love the most,
The star I always see
Is Thy white sacred Host,
Little and low like me."

—St. Teresa of the Child Jesus

The Shower of Roses

THE LITTLE FLOWER
AND THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT

BY

REV. JOSEPH HUSSLEIN, S.J.

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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE

1925

Imprimi Potest.

LAURENCE J. KELLY, S.J.
Præp. Prov. Marylandiæ—Neo-Ebor.

Nihil Obstat.

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES
Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK. October 25, 1925.

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Printed in the United States of America

DEDICATED TO

ST. THERESE
OF THE CHILD JESUS

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE XXVIII INTERNATIONAL
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

CHICAGO

1926

8312

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PART I

BEFORE THE TABERNACLE

CHAPTER I

EARLY EUCHARISTIC ATTRACTIONS

LOVE of the Holy Eucharist was early instilled into the soul of the little Teresa. Like a quickening dew it slipped into the heart of the "Little Flower," long before its tiny petals had unfolded in all their beauty. From the age of two, she tells us, she was already drawn to the Divine Spouse of virgins.

At what time she first came to know and love Him in His Blessed Sacrament we are not informed by her. The words she puts upon the lips of her sister Celine, in that delightful poem, "What I Used to Love," may well lead us to conclude she was there in reality describing her own experience no less than that of her playmate and praymate in that springtime of her childhood. In simple language she thus records these earliest intimacies of virginal affection for Christ in the Holy Eucharist:

"O, how I loved my heavenly Lord,
In His blest Sacrament adored!
He bound me to Him by His plighted word:
That He my Spouse would be
From infancy."

She was not yet four years of age when the following conversation between herself and Celine was overheard by their mother:

"How can God be in such a tiny Host?" asked Celine.

"That is not strange," replied little Teresa, "because God is Almighty."

"And what does 'Almighty' mean?"

"It means that He can do whatever He likes."

Happy little children, brought so early to the knowledge and love of the Supreme Good by the tender care of a wise and loving mother!

The delightful autobiography of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, written in obedience to the wish of her Mother Prioress, gives us only passing glimpses of this noble woman after God's own Heart; but they are enough to reveal her to us in all the charm of domestic affection, gentle as she was firm in her control, winning as she was saintly in her life. We find her always with her little ones, saying their prayers

with them, accompanying them in their walks, training them with all the skill of personal experience in the art of sanctity, and so finally, like St. Paul, making them imitators of herself as she also was an imitator of Christ. Thus reared in holiness from their tenderest years, it was only necessary to point out to them the Virgin Christ in His Holy Eucharist that they might love Him with all their hearts.

At the early death of this valiant woman the full responsibility of the home fell upon the "incomparable father" of that family, a man like St. Joseph, hidden and saintly in his life. St. Teresa, referring to his custom of daily reciting the family prayers with his children, wrote: "I had only to look at him to know how the saints pray."

But he was no less humanly tender than he was heroic in his faith and sacrifice. Constantly he deepened and strengthened in little Teresa the love of her Divine Spouse and of His Presence in the Eucharist. As an instance I may cite her own words in which she describes the rambles she was wont to take with him.

"Every afternoon," she says, "I went out for a walk with him, and we paid a visit to the

Blessed Sacrament in one or other of the churches." It was in this way that St. Teresa of the Child Jesus first saw the chapel of the Carmel in which she was to spend so many happy hours.

"Look, little Queen," he observed, using the pet name he had given her, "behind that big grating there are holy nuns who are always praying to Almighty God." Little did she then think that soon she, too, would be kneeling there with them before the Divine Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

At about the age of five, while playing among the flowers, of which she was always very fond, she already found her amusement in making little altars within openings that she happened to find in the garden wall. When her tiny structures were completed, she would run to call her father, who invariably shared in her delight. Incidentally, too, these diversions manifest the attraction which Altar and Tabernacle even then exercised over her, and how the Divine Presence had captivated her thoughts and her heart.

Holiness may be said to have been almost bred in the very nature of this favored child,

thanks to the eucharistic devotion of her wise and pious parents, who knew how to make piety joyous, while play itself was hallowed by piety. Thus the way had been lovingly prepared for that Divine Bridegroom of her soul who at once led her by these sweetly scented paths directly to the great central mystery of our Faith, the Holy Eucharist.

That love of God which the parents so carefully instilled into the soul of little Teresa was no mere sentiment. It was a love strong in action and in suffering.

"I offered myself to Our Lord to be His Little Flower," she writes. "I longed to console Him, to draw as near as possible to the Tabernacle, to be looked on, cared for, and gathered by Him."

The desire of complete self-oblation now took possession of her heart. Such, in particular, were the affections aroused in her while looking at a picture whose charming title was: "The Little Flower of the Tabernacle."

But her supreme happiness consisted in taking her place in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, there to await the moment when she could toss her flowers to the Divine King

"Never was I so happy as when I saw my rose-leaves touch the sacred Monstrance."

as He was borne along in triumph. She was not content merely to scatter them in His path—her love was far too intimate for that!—but she must even then signalize herself in her own daring way. And evidently no one thwarted these acts of childish affection which so delighted the Heart of her virginal Spouse. She herself tells us:

"Above all, I loved the procession of the Blessed Sacrament: what a joy it was to strew flowers in God's path! But before scattering them on the ground I threw them high in the air, and was never so happy as when I saw my rose-leaves touch the sacred Monstrance."

Every Sunday was a day of joy to her, when, as she tells us, "the whole family went to High Mass." Here she could satisfy her longing to be in the presence of Christ, to pour out her little heart before Him, and to listen to His own voice speaking to her from the silent Tabernacle.

Of the Little Flower's ardent desire for Holy Communion, almost from the days of babyhood, much remains to be said elsewhere in this volume, and also of her other eucharistic attractions, so remarkable in one of her tender years.

These were the first sparks of that great eucharistic love which was to inflame her soul.

Little Teresa, it may be a consolation for some souls to know, was not "popular" at school. Nor did she find it possible even later to enter into long, familiar conversations with her teachers, as others of the older pupils did, or to win any special tokens of favor from them, though she led in her studies. That was God's particular blessing in her regard. It drew her nearer to Him. It made her realize, with her vast capacity and desire for love, that He alone was her true and lasting Friend. If at times it produced within her a natural depression of spirit, it nevertheless taught her in consequence to appreciate more highly the consoling Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. His love alone could never fail her. Others might forget or overlook her; He would always have His Heart wide open for her. To us, too, let us remember, that love is extended, and to all who wish to come to Him.

Referring to a period in her life when twice a week she went to take lessons in a convent, just for the sake of being admitted into the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, she writes:

"So I worked in silence till the end of the lesson, and then, *as no one took any notice of me,* I went to the tribune in the chapel till Papa came to fetch me home. Here, during this silent visit, I found my one consolation; for was not Jesus my only Friend? To Him alone could I open my heart."

What graces must have been granted to her by her Divine Spouse in these trysts of love! She applied to herself in their fullest sense those words of Our Lord: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you." Nor was she ever disappointed, for she sought always to bring her will into complete conformity with His. Truly, therefore, could she sing:

"All things my love can gain when, heart to heart, I pray,
Alone with Jesus Christ in speechless ecstasy.
Beside His altar blest with Him I gladly stay:
O, this is heaven for me!"

It was here that in later years she was to pray so earnestly for our Holy Mother the Church; for those entrusted to her care; for friends, relatives, and her own Sisters in

Religion; for every soul, that God might enter in and establish there His reign of love, but especially for priests, that they might truly be "other Christs." Here, too, could she plead, like Moses on the mountain, that God might multiply vocations and send ever greater armies of workers into His vineyard and His harvest field.

But neither was the Church Suffering forgotten by her, the souls confined in Purgatory, for whom the Heart in the Tabernacle is moved with such tender affection. She herself tells us how her rose-leaves, made precious by the touch of the Divine Hand, were scattered by It upon those holy sufferers to extinguish their flames.

It is precisely in connection with the Holy Eucharist that so many indulgences can be gained by us for the Poor Souls. The one familiar prayer alone which is to be said after Communion before an image of the Crucified, enables us to gain a Plenary Indulgence each time we receive Our Divine Lord, provided some additional prayers—e. g., five "Our Fathers" and five "Hail Marys" are recited for the intention of the Holy Father.

A loving zeal to aid these souls in God's prison house, is a devotion which the Heart of Jesus has intimately connected with the Sacred Presence, with Communion and the Holy Mass, as also of course with the Rosary and the Way of the Cross. Our Lord seems to say: "If you love Me in My Sacrament of Love, help the souls whom I love, that you may hasten the day when I can clasp them to My Heart of Love."

But years passed, and Teresa too, like Our Divine Lord, "advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men." But never did she lose the simplicity and sweet charm of her childhood days. If then she delighted to cast her flowers before the Eucharistic King, and her heart leaped with joy as her petals touched the sacred Monstrance, she now continued each day to scatter her blossoms before God, but hereafter these flowers were to be her sacrifices and prayers, her joys and sufferings of life, all offered up in the trusting spirit of childhood, with the utmost love and self-abandonment.

"But how should I show my love, since love proves itself by deeds?" she asks, and her

answer comes: "Well, the little child will strew flowers. She will embalm the Divine Heart with their fragrance. She will sing Love's canticle in silvery tones."

Well may we fancy her words as joyously reminiscent of those Blessed Sacrament Processions of earlier days, the happy memory of which clung like a perfume to her heart. How redolent with these odors are the thoughts that follow!

"The only way I have of proving my love is to strew flowers before Thee—that is to say, I will let no tiny sacrifice pass, no look, no word. I wish to profit by the smallest actions, and to do them for Love. I wish to suffer for Love's sake, and for Love's sake even to rejoice; thus shall I strew my flowers. But not one shall I find without scattering its petals before Thee. And I will sing, I will sing always, even if my roses must be gathered from amidst thorns; and the longer and the sharper the thorns, the sweeter shall be my song."

How beautifully eucharistic, then, the entire concept is! How it reminds us of those ranks of little, white-clad children, with innocence beaming upon their bright and happy faces, as

they solemnly strew their blossoms in the pathway of the King, as He is borne aloft between them in His golden Monstrance! And how often, too, the Little Flower scattered those petals of her roses before that Altar Throne in the Carmel's silent chapel, where her soul found its sweetest resting place. "This fragrant shower, these delicate petals of little price, these songs of love from a poor little heart," she knew were pleasing to Jesus, refreshing to His Heart, like as the rose-leaves strewn by children's hands.

"Trifles they are, but Thou wilt smile on them. The Church Triumphant, stooping towards her child, will gather up these scattered rose-leaves, and, placing them in Thy Divine Hands, there to acquire an infinite value, will shower them on the Church Suffering to extinguish its flames, and on the Church Militant to obtain its victory."

Such were the results in large part due to that eucharistic devotion practised by her from childhood and constantly intensified with the years, until from the shelter of the Carmel she might melodiously sing:

"My Heaven within the Host safe hid and perfect lies,
Where Jesus Christ abides, Divinest, fairest Fair;
From that great fount of love shall life eternal rise,
There night and day my Lord gives heed unto my prayer."

Parents should learn to stimulate in the hearts of their children, even from their tenderest years, those eucharistic longings and affections which worked so mightily within the soul of little Teresa, and which helped so greatly to keep it always pure, holy and beautiful. Let us not deprive our little ones of their sublimest heritage, the love of Jesus in the Eucharist.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE PRISONER OF LOVE

IT WAS Teresa's clothing day in the Carmel. Her father had come to meet her at the enclosure door, his eyes filled with tears of joy. Pressing her to his heart, he exclaimed:

"Ah! here is my little Queen!"

He then gave her his arm, and together they solemnly entered the public chapel.

His two eldest daughters had already joined the Carmel. Celine too had confided to him her wish to leave the world. His gratitude therefore knew no bounds. Where could he better pour forth the gladness of his heart than in the presence of his Eucharistic King? The ardent desire of his saintly wife, during her brief life, was now receiving its last and complete fulfilment.

"I beseech Thee," she repeatedly had asked of Almighty God, "to make me the mother of many children, and to grant that all of them may be dedicated to Thee."

Such, too, had been his own most fervent wish, though he never sought to forestall the workings of the Holy Ghost in the souls confided to him.

"Let us go before the Blessed Sacrament," he now said, "and thank God for all the graces He has granted us and the honor He has paid me in choosing His spouses from my household. God has indeed done me great honor in asking for my children. If I possessed anything better, I would hasten to offer it to Him."

More than ever the Little Flower was henceforth to bloom and spend herself for her Beloved, and draw, in ever greater measure, from the Divine Sun of Love the sweetness and beauty which were so to entrance the world in after years and turn men's hearts to God in new and fuller dedication. Many, indeed, were the lessons she was to learn during the moments of sublime intimacy that were to pass between herself and that hidden Bridegroom of her soul, speaking to her from behind the lattice, in the silence of the Tabernacle.

In her masque, "The Angels of the Crib," she makes the Angel of the Eucharist fly to earth to seek Christ's Altar Throne. She herself

might now sing with this celestial Guardian of her Eucharistic God:

"Here shall I dwell in this blest place,
The sanctuary of my King,
And here before His veiled face
My hymns of burning love shall sing."

In the Holy Eucharist she beheld the completion of Christ's profound self-abasement: the Divine King of Glory submitting Himself in wondrous humility to all His priests. They may have less or greater fervor, they may advance or delay the hour of the Holy Sacrifice, yet He is always ready to come down from His high Heaven at their call. The Faithful, too, may heed His invitation. They may hasten to Him with the utmost frequency and affection, or they may delay to follow His invitation and approach Him only with coldness and indifference. Yet He gives Himself to all alike.

"O my Beloved," she exclaimed, in a prayer composed by her for a novice, "under the white eucharistic veil Thou dost indeed appear to me meek and humble of heart! To teach me humility Thou canst not further abase Thyself, and so I wish to respond to Thy love by putting

Teresa escapes from home and goes to church in pouring rain.

myself in the lowest place, by sharing Thy humiliations, so that I may 'have part with Thee' in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Before the Blessed Sacrament, too, she learned to know the greatness of that love for us which burns within the Eucharistic Heart of Christ. How could she be deaf to the appealing cry of that Prisoner of Love? Keenly and ever more perfectly she came to understand His insatiable thirst for our poor human love which every hour would seem, as it were, to consume Him:

"Thou, the great God whom Heaven and earth adore,
Art here, a prisoner for me, night and day,
And every hour I hear Thy voice implore:
'I thirst!' 'I thirst!' 'I thirst!'—for love alway."

What answer could she give to this cry other than the complete oblation of herself to live for Him alone and be in turn the victim of His Divine and infinitely tender love for her? What other answer can any of us give to that yearn-

ing love of Christ? With heart aflame she thus, therefore, makes her reply of love for love:

"Behold, Thy prisoner am I;
I, too, cry ever unto Thee
Thine own Divine and tender cry:
'I thirst! O let me die
Of love for Thee!'"

It was not her own delight, however, which she sought in this love, but the delight of her Divine Spouse. The reason for our discouragement is frequently the fact that we seek inordinately after our own consolation rather than leave ourselves entirely to the Divine Lover of our souls, seeking only to afford Him pleasure and delight. Suffering for His sake became her greatest earthly joy. "One cannot attain the end without adopting the means," was her simple philosophy, "and as Our Lord made me understand that it was by the Cross He would give me souls, the more crosses I met with, the more strong grew my attraction to suffering." This affection, however, she kept hidden within her soul as the secret of the King. Yet she could not help expressing it in her transports of song. The Cross and the Eucharist she men-

tions together as her two greatest treasures upon earth, her happiness and her riches. Charmingly she compares them with the exalted privileges possessed by her Guardian Angel and feels no inclination to envy him his own excessive joy and splendor:

"Thine are Heaven's glory and delight,
The riches of the King of kings;
The Host in our ciboriums bright
Is mine, and all the wealth pain brings.
So with the Cross, and with the Host,
And with thine aid, dear Angel Friend,
I wait in peace on time's dark coast
Heaven's happiness that knows no end."

What more indeed can we desire here below, with Mary for our Mother, whom the Little Flower loved so tenderly, and our Angel Guardian ever by our side, and Heaven's Lord and God as all our own, our Prisoner of Love, our daily food? We too can offer Him not only our love in return, but likewise our little sufferings and sacrifices and voluntary self-denials, all brought to Him and laid upon His breast as a bundle of sweet-scented myrrh.

No wonder then that in spite of her longing

to be dissolved and be with Christ in His eternal home, the Little Flower of Jesus would not ask of her Divine Lover that the period of her earthly exile might in the least be shortened. She had instead but one desire, that His holy will might be most perfectly done:

"Beyond the gloomy cloud
Ever the skies are fair,
And angels sing aloud,
And God is reigning there;
And yet without a tear
I wait that bliss above,
Who in the Host have here
The perfect fruit of love."

We must not, however, imagine that this attraction, which so strongly drew her to the Sacramental Presence of her Lord, the eucharistic court where the Divine King is ever prepared to grant us audience and admit our souls to the virginal intimacies of His Love, could ever withhold her from the performance of even the least of her lowly duties. The thought of seeking Him in preference to these never entered her mind. To be ready to leave God for the sake of God, as we may express it, is

the test of true love. Our hearts can then still remain with Him in an uninterrupted communion of that perfect love which consists in doing His holy will expressed for us in the daily duties of our life.

Another test of the strength of that love which we protest before the Blessed Sacrament is the patience and humility which we practise in our common intercourse with men, and our willingness to yield to others in all things, where this can be prudently and justly done. A little incident from the life of St. Teresa will illustrate these eucharistic virtues.

Teresa had been sent to work in the laundry. As it happened, the Sister opposite her, in washing handkerchiefs, repeatedly splashed her with the dirty water. "My first impulse," she writes, "was to draw back and wipe my face, to show the offender I should be glad if she would behave more quietly; but the next moment I thought how foolish it was to refuse the treasures God offered me so generously, and I refrained from betraying my annoyance."

The action of the Sister had been due to mere thoughtlessness, and her attention might have been called to it without any act of

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uncharitableness. Yet Teresa's finer sense overcame her repugnance, and at the end of half an hour she had taken quite a fancy to this "novel kind of aspersion." She even resolved to come often to "the happy spot where such treasures were freely bestowed."

This is the folly of Christ's little ones which the worldly-minded cannot understand. It is the folly, too, of the Divine Prisoner of the Tabernacle who is constantly enduring with loving patience such petty annoyances, even from the souls whom He has particularly favored. How many little slights and irreverences have we been guilty of in His Sacred Presence; how many sallies of idle, vain or uncharitable thoughts; what bespatterings far worse than those which the Little Flower so lovingly endured, are daily received by Him in His Blessed Sacrament through our carelessness, distractions or worldliness. Should we not then rejoice to endure in turn a little annoyance or inconvenience for love of Him?

To make reparation for all the indignities and outrages to which Jesus is subjected in His Blessed Sacrament is in a special way the purpose of Devotion to the Sacred Heart. It

is a practice most urgently asked of us and most pleasing to Him. But to delight His Heart to the utmost we should imitate the tenderness, zeal and fervor of His Little Flower, making our own all the desires of His Eucharistic Heart and striving to live only for their fulfilment.

Entering the Carmel meant for her to live henceforth a life of love, devoted entirely to the Prisoner of the Tabernacle; spending herself in His service like a rose that yields up its sweetness and gladly withers for Him; bearing all grief and pains undaunted only to give joy to Jesus and evermore lifting up, as she says, her heart to the rays of His white Host,

"Within that fire of love all self to burn away,
And like a Seraph blest to serve Thee night
and day."

CHAPTER III

WISHES BEFORE THE TABERNACLE

WONDERFUL are the thoughts of Calderon in his matchless dramas of the Holy Eucharist. Sublime are the eagle flights of St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, in his mighty song of the Blessed Sacrament, which the Church herself intones with worshipful solemnity. But sweet and glad and tender, full of child-like confidence and love, is that poem of the Little Flower which tells of her longings before the Altar, "My Wishes Before the Tabernacle."

As a prelude to her more complete development of the same theme let me first quote here the exquisite verses of our poet priest of the South, Father Abram Ryan, expressing entirely similar wishes in the presence of the Eucharist. They strike the keynote of that music whose full richness is unfolded in the Little Flower's song. Like David before the Ark, the white-stoled, consecrated singer pours

forth his eucharistic longings before the Lord of his heart, dwelling here as a Prisoner of Love for him:

"I wish I were the little key
That locks love's Captive in,
And lets Him out to go and free
A sinful heart from sin.

"I wish I were the chalice fair
That holds the Blood of Love,
When every flash lights holy prayer
Upon its way above.

"I wish I were the little flower
So near the Host's sweet face,
Or like the light that half an hour
Burns on the shrine of grace.

"I wish I were the altar where,
As on His mother's breast,
Christ nestles, like a child, fore'er
In eucharistic rest.

"But oh! my God, I wish the most
That my poor heart may be
A home all holy for each Host
That comes in love to me!"

Such is the sweet simplicity of true and noble poetry. The same deeply sincere, yet tenderly playful wishes arose in the soul of our Little Flower, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, and they have doubtless suggested themselves to many another devout and poetic soul. But there is one quality which impresses itself upon us as peculiarly her own and constitutes the great charm of her writings as of her life. It is the supreme confidence she always placed in the love and mercy of Almighty God. With infallible certainty she knew that whatever wishes God inspires, He also means to fulfil, and perhaps will realize them for us in far more wonderful ways than we could ever even imagine for ourselves.

"My little Mother," she wrote in a note to her sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus, at a time when the hand of death was already sensibly upon her, "you will understand how this evening the vessel of God's mercy has overflowed for your child . . . Even now I know it! Yea, all my hopes will be fulfilled . . . Verily the Lord will work wonders for me, and they will infinitely surpass my boundless desires."

In that delightful intimacy and confidence of

her love lies also one of the greatest charms of her eucharistic poem.

Well, indeed, might she be tempted to envy, as she says, the little Tabernacle key which can at any hour open the eucharistic prison house. But is she not herself even more highly blest? Hers, in truth, is the wondrous gift of faith, that master key which can unlock for her at any moment the closed Dwelling of her Eucharistic Lord. Hers is the privilege, more highly favored even than the queenly Esther, to enter in unsummoned to her Lord, and to fly to the embraces of her Spouse and King. His very Heart is opened for her that within it she can "safely hide." And all these privileges we, too, may share with her. Charmingly, therefore, she sings:

"*O little key!* I envy thee,
For thou canst ope, at any hour,
The eucharistic prison house,
Where dwells the God of Love and Power.
And yet, oh tender mystery!
One effort of my faith alone
Unlocks the Tabernacle door,
And hides me there with Christ, my Own."

"Beside His altar blest with Him I gladly stay:
O, this is heaven for me."

So, in turn, she might envy the red altar-lamp that there keeps vigil night and day; but cannot her own love burn with a light more steady and more true? Our own lives, too, like some rich aromatic oil, can constantly be consumed, as hers in all truth was to be, by the bright flames of Divine love. Like her, also we can labor to win souls for Christ, that they too may burn with love for Him through all eternity.

"*O lamp* within the holy place,
Whose mystic lights forever shine,
I fain would burn with fires of love
As bright before my God and thine.
Yet, miracle of wondrous bliss!
Such flames are mine; and, day by day,
Can I win souls to Jesus Christ
To burn with His pure love for aye."

She might envy the consecrated Altar-stone to which Christ comes down in every Holy Mass, to rest there as once in the Crib of Bethlehem. Yet why should even this appear more blest than she? Is not her own warm heart a better resting place for the Divine

Babe than the hard stone, however sacred? Is it not a cosier nook for the Infant God to nestle in than even the cold manger where His Mother's hands were forced to lay Him in the winter's night?

"O consecrated altar stone!
I envy thee with every morn.
As once in Bethlehem's blessed shed,
The Eternal Word on thee is born.
Yet, gentle Saviour! hear my plea;
Enter my heart, O Lord Divine!
'Tis no cold stone I offer Thee,
Who dost desire this heart of mine!"

Taking lesson by her, how happy should we feel to be able to offer Him anew, each morning at Holy Mass, a Bethlehem within our souls, all sweet and bright and warm with love! There Joseph and Mary can be invited to adore Him with their tenderest affection, and aid us in daily gaining from Him boundless favors for ourselves and others.

But might she not envy, the Little Flower continues, the pure white corporal which angels reverently guard? Yet pure and white as this

must ever be, cannot our own souls be made as pure and white as any linen that was ever spun and bleached and cleansed by mortal hands? Have we not the Sacrament of Penance, instituted by Christ? And, besides this, cannot we, by frequent acts of perfect love, constantly cleanse away all our daily faults and imperfections, through God's grace, and be ever again made pure as the driven snow, fair as silver lilies, white as the very swaddling clothes in which the Lamb of God was wrapped on the first Christmas night? But for this, as for every other grace, we need Our Blessed Mother's aid, and so St. Teresa sings:

"*O corporal* that angels guard
What envy of thee fills my breast!
On thee, as in His swaddling bands,
I see my only Treasure rest.
Ah, Virgin Mother! change my heart
Into a corporal pure and fair,
Whereon the snow-white Host may rest,
And the meek Lamb find shelter there."

More beautiful also is the bright paten, on which the Sacred Host is placed, and where, as on a throne of gold, the heavenly King

reposes. But what was all its preciousness, as the Little Flower well knew, compared with her own dedicated breast wherein, above all other places, her Jesus delighted to make His throne of love?

"O holy paten! Jesus makes
Of thee His sacramental throne.
Ah, if He would abase Himself,
To dwell awhile with me alone!
Jesus fulfils my longing hope,
Nor must I wait until I die:
He comes to me! He lives in me!
His *ostensorium* am I!"

As Christ is lifted for adoration before the eyes of Faithful in the resplendent Monstrance, so He is no less truly enclosed in the breast of each communicant coming from the Altar-rail. There, too, we may humbly worship Him and receive His benediction as He passes by. Each breast that receives Him in Holy Communion is "His ostensorium." His presence, therefore, should be made all the more apparent by our outward reverence while He dwells within us bodily, since in truth we are then His living tabernacles. Though the species of the bread

change, Christ undergoes no alteration; glorious He comes to us, glorious He abides in us.

Finally, sings the Little Flower, she might envy the jeweled chalice that holds His Precious Blood, the saving Blood that was poured forth for us on Calvary. But how can even this compare with the preciousness of a soul purchased at the price of that very Blood of Christ?

"*The chalice,* too, I fain would be,
Where I adore the Blood Divine.
Yet at the Holy Sacrifice,
That Precious Blood each day is mine.
More dear to Jesus is my soul,
Than chalices of gold could be;
His altar is a Calvary new,
Thereon His Blood is paid for me."

Are not our souls the workmanship of God Himself? What chalice was ever of a worth as inestimable as they, or wrought with an artistry so consummate! Gladly God Himself will jewel them with all the virtues in which He so much delights, with beryls, emeralds and topaz stones and gems of purest ray, provided only we will leave ourselves trustingly, entirely

to Him, seeking only in all things to do His will.

Thus, the song of the Little Flower sweetly teaches us to appreciate more fully the favor Christ bestows upon us each time He comes to us, and the loving fervor wherewith we should receive Him. It will not only serve us for fruitful contemplation, but might well be studied and memorized in every Catholic school.

The consideration of the two remaining stanzas with which St. Teresa concludes this poem, will be found in Chapter X of the present volume, "Mystic Wheat and Grapes." *

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* It should be noted that the quotations from the poems of the Little Flower used in this volume are either directly taken from the translations made by Miss S. L. Emery or else based upon them. These translations were issued in 1907 by the Carmelite Convent, Mount Pleasant Avenue, Boston.

PART II

AT THE COMMUNION RAIL

Teresa as a First Communicant.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARING FOR FIRST COMMUNION

GOLDEN days were the First Communion feasts that followed one another in the home of the Little Flower.

Marie, her father's "diamond," and Pauline, his "pearl," had already celebrated their "happy day" when Leonie's turn came, the third of the sisters. Teresa was then a little child, whom Leonie had often sung to sleep. But, tiny as she was, the great event could not fail to make a deep impression upon her mind. She remembered likewise in later years the poor child whom her mother dressed as a companion for Leonie, according to the beautiful custom among the well-to-do families in Alençon.

"This child did not leave Leonie for an instant on that happy day, and in the evening at the grand dinner she sat in the place of honor."

When Celine's great day came, as the fourth in order, Teresa was seven years of age. God had summoned their good mother to Himself, and the home duty of preparing Celine fell entirely upon the father and the elder sisters. There was no question here of the delusion, so sadly common among negligent Catholics, that it suffices to leave the religious instruction of children to priests and teachers in the Catholic schools, as if parents, brothers and sisters had no part in this important work.

Besides her preparation at school and the First Communion retreat, Celine was instructed in her own home with the most delicate affection and care. During the last week in particular her sisters spoke to her every evening upon this subject. With all their zeal and skill they sought to enlighten her mind and inflame her heart, and to make of this First Communion, what it should in reality be, a turning-point for all her life, a new starting-point for a career of Christian perfection.

Teresa on these occasions sought to linger in the room and gather up all the spiritual wisdom that she could from this instruction and encouragement. The decree on Early First

Communion had not yet been issued, and she knew that she should be obliged to wait for another four long years before her own turn would come. Yet she determined within herself that this would not keep her from beginning immediately with her preparation for that great event.

"I thought that four years was not too long to spend in making ready to receive our dear Lord."

Among the instructions which she overheard, there was one in particular that deeply influenced her. It shows what impression our words may make upon the plastic minds of the little ones, even when uttered in a conversation not at all intended for them. Fortunately it is as easy to edify as to scandalize them, to sow good seed as to scatter cockle.

"From the time of your First Communion," someone remarked to Celine, "you must begin a new life."

That chance seed fell upon Teresa's heart, and by the grace of God it grew up into a flower whose beauty and fragrance were to be an everlasting delight to the Divine Heart of her Spouse.

Seated on the knees of her pious mother, Teresa learns to pray.

"At once," she writes, "I made a resolution not to wait till the time of my First Communion, but to begin with Celine."

No wonder, then, that Celine's First Communion became for her a source of unspeakable blessings and happiness! She thus admits us into her confidence:

"At last the happy day came. What a delightful impression it has left on my mind! It was like a foretaste of my own First Communion. How many graces I received that day! I look on it as one of the most beautiful of my life."

Surely the infinitely good God communicated Himself to her on that day by uniting Himself with her innocent and ardent soul in a tender and bountiful way. The incident, I have said, shows how careful we must be in the presence of these little ones whose angels look upon the face of God. There is rich soil in little hearts where the thistle or the rose may strike their roots more quickly than we think. The seed we scatter may produce a harvest of which we never dreamed.

A year before this date, when Teresa was only six years old, the idea of her First Com-

munion was already vividly in her mind, as a little incident will show which happened at that time. She had even at this early age been piously taught to give little alms to the poor. It was on one of her daily walks with "Papá" that she wished to give a penny to a poor old man whom she saw dragging himself painfully along. He did not, however, care to take her gift, but shook his head with a sorrowful smile. Teresa feared that she had only caused him still greater distress. Her heart was deeply touched, and she knew not what to do.

"I felt so sad I could hardly keep from crying; then I remembered having heard that one obtains all the favors asked for on one's First Communion Day. This thought consoled me immediately, and though I was only six years old at the time, I said to myself: 'I will pray for my poor old man on the day of my First Communion.' Five years later I faithfully kept my resolution. I have always thought that my childish prayer for this suffering member of Christ has been blessed and rewarded."

Clearly there could have been no reason, as we now can argue with certainty from the express words of Pope Pius X, for refusing her

Holy Communion at this age. All necessary conditions were fulfilled, or could at once have been supplied.

"The age of discretion, alike for Confession and for Holy Communion," says the decree *Quam Singulari,* "is the age at which the child *begins* to use its reason, that is, about the seventh year, or later, or even sooner."

Not even the full use of reason is required, the Holy Father tells us, "since the incipient use is enough; that is, a certain use of reason." Much less is a complete knowledge of Christian doctrine supposed. It is sufficient that the child can distinguish between the Body of the Lord and common bread; and that it understands, according to its capacity, "the mysteries of the Faith necessary as the means of salvation." This is the only catechetical knowledge the decree demands. The devotion considered adequate for these little ones is such "as their age allows."

Neither parents nor priests are free to delay at pleasure the First Communion of the child. "The obligation of the precept of Confession and Communion," the decree contines, "*binding* the child, falls principally upon those who have

charge of it, that is, upon the parents, confessor, teacher, and parish priest. To the father, however, or whoever occupies his place, and to the confessor it belongs, according to the Roman Catechism, to admit the child to its First Communion."

In cases of prudent doubt concerning the discretion of the child, no obligation exists on the part of parents or confessor, but the benefit of the doubt may always be given to our little ones. When, however, the seventh year is reached, the Spanish moral theologian, Ferreres, says, the presumption is entirely in favor of the child.

From the knowledge we possess of the early childhood of the Little Flower, it seems sufficiently clear that First Communion could have been given her when she was only four years of age. Hers was in no sense an ordinary case. Naturally and supernaturally she had received gifts that were truly marvelous. Even at that early age she understood perfectly the essential doctrine of the Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and her reason appears to have been sufficiently developed to grasp easily "the mysteries of the Faith necessary for salva-

tion." Those familiar with the references she herself makes to her childhood can hardly doubt this.

We may recall in this connection the beautiful instance of "Little Nellie of Holy God" who was privileged to receive her First Communion at about that age.

She was an orphan at St. Finbar's Industrial School in Ireland, under the care of the Good Shepherd nuns. Though a great sufferer and soon to die, she was never heard to complain after she had learned, at about the age of three, the story of "Holy God," as she always called Our Divine Lord.

Her desire to receive Him in Holy Communion was so intense that when this was not granted her she asked to have at least one of the Sisters come and kiss her with the lips that had just received "Holy God." Finally, some two months before her death, which occurred when she was a little less than four and a half years of age, a Jesuit Father obtained the Bishop's permission to give her First Communion, on assuring him that she had really arrived at the use of reason.

"The child," wrote the Father, "hungers for her God and received Him from my hands in a transport of love."

The decree on Early First Communion had not yet been published and so the Bishop's permission had been asked, but during the following two months Holy Communion was given her thirty-two times, before "Holy God" at last gathered His "little violet."

A loathsome odor from a decayed bone in her jaw disappeared entirely after her First Communion. She would admonish her nurse, ordinarily a daily communicant, whenever the latter had not received "Holy God," though no one gave her this information. So, too, she could tell when the Blessed Sacrament was taken out of the Tabernacle for Exposition, though she was not in the chapel and no indication was given her of it.

"Holy God is not in the lock-up today," she would say, and then add insistently: "Take me down to Him."

After her death the children of St. Finbar's School made a novena "that she would obtain for her little companions and all little children

over the whole world the great favor of receiving Holy Communion as near as possible to the age at which she received it." Writing to Pope Pius X, the children insinuated that it was through little Nellie's intercession that the great decree on Early Communion for children had been issued.

The happiness of receiving her Lord at so early an age was not to be enjoyed by the Little Flower, but God had His own wonderful counsels in her regard.

"Perhaps," she herself explains, "Our Lord wished me to know something of the world before He paid His visit to my soul, so that I might choose more deliberately the way in which I was to follow Him."

God is always able in His ineffable wisdom to sanctify and lead to the highest perfection the souls that truly love Him and yearn for Him. It was through no fault of her own, or of those responsible for her, that the Little Flower was withheld from this source of grace until her eleventh year.

It chanced, in fact, that when Teresa was at the age of ten, she was out walking with one

of her sisters, and her eye caught sight of the Bishop of Bayeux, who happened to be passing by in the vicinity. Without hesitation the Little Flower was determined then and there to beg of him permission to make her First Communion during that same year. Only her sister's intervention prevented her from darting over to him and pleading her case before him in the open street.

But long before that time, when still a very little child, Teresa had conceived an even more daring plan. It was no less momentous a project than "stealing the little Jesus." All, of course, was prompted by love alone, but every detail had been carefully worked out by her. Under cover of the darkness she would receive Him at the Midnight Mass on Christmas. No one, she was sure, could see her. She would quietly slip up among the crowd to the altar rail, and so partake of the Divine Banquet for which her soul hungered. Standing erect she could probably have reached up high enough to be given Holy Communion.

It was all a wonderful *coup d'état!* She would return carrying off with her the little

Jesus, safe within her breast. But first it was necessary to tell one of her sisters, both because otherwise she might displease the Good God and also that she might gain an accomplice in her pious plot.

"I will slip up by your side," she explained. "No one will ever see me. May I do that?" Alas! she was not to wait long for a reply.

"No!" came the inexorable answer, and with that her face fell sadly and her heart sank within her, for she would be obliged to wait yearningly through the many long years that must still pass before she could reach the age of eleven. "Little Teresa sighed!"

How indeed can the world ever be grateful enough to Pope Pius X for his tremendously important Decree that changed the wrong attitude on First and Frequent Communion then so widespread throughout the world!

Perhaps something of the yearning which the Little Flower then felt, and which was always to fill her heart for the coming of her Eucharistic God, may in later years have been put by her upon the lips of her Angel of the Eucharist when she made him exclaim:

"Would that by miracle, I too
Might feed on that celestial Bread,
Might quaff the drink forever new,
That Blood which was for mortals shed!"

Angels themselves have not the privilege that we possess, although theirs is the unspeakable happiness of beholding the Face of Our Father who is in Heaven, and rejoicing forever in the Beatific Vision.

CHAPTER V

ST. TERESA'S FIRST COMMUNION

IT WAS the morning of May 8, 1884, the Little Flower's First Communion Day. The least details of it seem apparently to have remained impressed upon her memory: the joyful awakening, the reverent and tender embraces, the schoolroom filled with snow-white frocks, the solemn entrance into the chapel and the melody of the morning hymn: "O Altar of God, where the Angels are hovering." Everything contributed to the beauty and devotion of that great event.

"I shall always remember my First Communion Day as one of unclouded happiness," she writes. "It seems to me that I could not have been better prepared."

Marie, her eldest sister, had taken upon herself the duty of instructing her at home.

"Every evening," says Teresa, "I spent a long time with her, listening eagerly to all she said. How delightfully she talked to me! I

felt myself set on fire by her noble, generous spirit. As the warriors of old trained their children in the profession of arms, so she trained me for the battle of life and roused my ardor by pointing to the victor's palm."

We may all take model, in our work for souls, by this devoted teacher. Zealously she directed the desires of her younger sister to amassing the imperishable riches of God, inflaming her heart with the purest ambitions and helping to adorn her soul with every ornament of virtue that might attract her Heavenly Spouse.

Teresa was now eleven years of age. The fact that our own dear little children have the privilege, not accorded even to her, of receiving the Divine Lover of their souls at the first use of reason should make our solicitude for them only the more tender.

What happiness indeed to be able to share so intimately in procuring for Our Divine Saviour the joy which fills His Heart in uniting Himself with these favorites of His love! Could there be jealousy in Heaven, the angels might envy us our task. And who can measure

the graces which come to those who zealously devote themselves to this work?

Still another incident should here be recalled before coming to the great event of Teresa's First Communion Day. It is an object lesson in the good that can be accomplished through judiciously chosen literature.

Three months before the longed-for day a little manuscript book had been placed in Teresa's hand by the Prioress of the Carmel at Lisieux. It taught her, as she tells us, to stir up ever new transports of love and diligently to fill her heart with flowers of every kind on which to cradle her heavenly Guest, the Divine Babe of Bethlehem, when He should come to dwell within her.

"So each day I made a number of little sacrifices and acts of love, which were to be changed into so many flowers: now violets, another time roses, then cornflowers, daisies or forget-me-nots. In a word, all nature's blossoms were to form in me a cradle for the Holy Child."

Happy little Teresa! But why should not all our Catholic children be so blessed in the affectionate and prudent care bestowed on them by those who have them in charge? Priests

Teresa receives her First Communion in the chapel of the Benedictine Nuns at Lisieux.

and Religious, parents, sisters and brothers, relatives and friends can all contribute to this noble work. That is one of the great lessons of the Little Flower's First Communion.

So the three months of immediate preparation passed, full of Divine affection and sound instruction, thanks to those who had her in their charge. Then the retreat began, during which she remained at the Abbey in the care of the nuns. She was deeply touched in particular by the kindness of the first mistress, who came each night with her little lamp and, softly parting the curtains of the bed, tenderly kissed the motherless little child.

At last dawned what St. Teresa describes as "the most beautiful day of all the days of my life." The happy moment itself approached, the moment desired so long and realized at length, after all those years of eager waiting.

"I would not and I could not tell you all," she continues in the story of her life, addressing her Mother Prioress. "Some things lose their fragrance when exposed to the air."

Yet enough has been told by her to admit us sufficiently into her confidence. No other pen than hers can recount the intimacies of that first

sacramental union of her soul with Christ in the Holy Eucharist:

"How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! It was indeed an embrace of love. I felt that I was loved, and I said: 'I love Thee and I give myself to Thee forever.' Jesus asked nothing of me, and claimed no sacrifice; for a long time He and little Teresa had known and understood each other. That day our meeting was more than simple recognition, it was perfect union. We were no longer two. Teresa had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the immensity of the ocean; Jesus alone remained—He was the Master, the King! Had not Teresa asked Him to take away her liberty which frightened her? She felt herself so weak and frail, that she wished to be forever united to the Divine Strength."

With this her joy became "so intense, so deep, that it could not be restrained." Tears of happiness welled up into her eyes and overflowed. Those who took notice thought it was because she felt the absence of her mother, whom God had called away from earth; or of her dearly beloved sister, Pauline, who on that same day

was espoused to her Divine King within the blissful seclusion of the Carmelite cloister.

"And no one understood," adds Teresa herself, "that all the joy of Heaven had come down into one heart, and that this heart, exiled, weak and mortal as it was, could not contain it without tears."

When later she wished to describe the bountiful blessings she received at the Shrine of Our Lady of Victories, she needed only to say that the graces Our Lady obtained for her were like those of her First Communion Day.

On the afternoon of this happy day she was privileged to read aloud, for herself and her companions, the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. With all the affection of her heart she offered herself up to the Mother of that Divine King who had united Himself with her, and Mary in turn bowed tenderly down to that motherless child and accepted it once more for her own. The Little Flower herself here refers to the time of her miraculous cure, when Our Lady smiled upon her and she was suddenly made whole again after a most serious and mysterious sickness that baffled all earthly physicians.

"She seemed to look lovingly on her Little Flower and to smile on her again, and I thought of the visible smile which had once cured me, and of all I owed her. Had she not herself, on the morning of that 8th of May, placed in the garden of my soul her Son Jesus, the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valleys?"

There were still minor chords of joy that should at least be mentioned in passing: the gift of a beautiful watch received from her father, and the happy feast prepared for her at home. Delightful, too, beyond words was the visit to her Carmelite sister, Pauline, now wearing like her a white veil and crowned with a garland of roses, as the newly-wedded bride of Christ, espoused to Him in His garden of spices, the Carmel at Lisieux.

"My happiness was perfect" sums up all that she could say. Though absolute perfection is not to be found in human happiness, it was, as it were, a slight foretaste of what God has prepared for those that love Him.

Little Teresa had now completed her First Communion Day on earth, but there was still another First Communion to which she was to look forward with eager longing, "the day of

the First and eternal Communion" in her Heavenly Home. The sensible joy of her First Communion here below was soon to pass, swallowed up in the darkness of this vale of tears. Not so the rapture of that other union when, as she strikingly says:

"Forever my delight shall seem as new
As the first time my soul shall enter Heaven."

The Little Flower's First Communion Day on earth has passed indeed, yet gladly will she now assist, through God's mercy and love, her little sisters and brothers striving to prepare in turn for their own great day.

An interesting instance comes to mind in this connection. It is that of a little girl pupil at Loire Inférieure, in France. The child had entirely lost the power of walking, and her back was painfully affected. According to expert opinion she was suffering from paralysis of the spinal cord. The faint hope that she might possibly be able to walk after a year of electric treatment was soon dispelled. The first applications of the supposed remedy left her in a worse condition than before.

But the First Communion Day of the children in her school was fast approaching, and she too was to have been among the number of the happy first communicants. Alas, what hope was there now that she would be able to approach the Holy Table! The Lord must be brought to her bed of pain if He would come to her at all. At this time it happened that some one spoke to her of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus. It was many years before St. Teresa's canonization and so all the world had not yet been made familiar as now with the Little Flower. But her name and story were briefly told the little child.

"The Little Flower of Jesus will cure me!" she at once exclaimed. "I shall walk for my First Communion Day."

The prayers of her schoolmates were joined to hers; but the time set for the great event approached nearer and nearer, and yet there was no answer. On the night, however, between Wednesday and Thursday in Easter Week she was lying sleepless in her bed with a light burning in her room. Suddenly, according to the account of her Head Mistress, she beheld

"a pretty little face," as she afterwards described it, smiling upon her.

"You will soon be able to walk . . . this very day even!" were the words which she testified the apparition had spoken to her.

"I am going to walk today," she assured her parents. "I have seen the Little Flower during the night and she told me so."

That afternoon, towards three o'clock, while reposing on a couch to which she had been carried, she again heard the same "sweet, gentle voice." It said to her: "Walk!"

Helpless as she had previously been, her bones disjointed by the disease, the child instantly arose and ran to throw herself into the arms of her mother. Three weeks later she knelt with her companions at the Holy Table, and with firm step returned to her place, bearing within her breast her heavenly Guest, united with her for the first time, in his Sacrament of Love.

It is particularly noted that the little one had never seen a likeness of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus. When such a picture was finally shown her, she exclaimed:

"This is indeed the face that I saw. I

recognize it. She was dressed as a nun, but I did not notice her veil; it is her face alone that is stamped upon my memory."

That face of the "little Teresa!" How it has helped, by Divine favor, to win the world for God. All childhood's innocence and sweetness, its trust and love and purity, there look down upon us, while God's grace is made, as we might say, visible to human sight. Above all we behold in it the brightness and the beauty of her Eucharistic God reflected in her features, and all the sweetness of her own great love for Him, who with each Communion had more perfectly completed that transformation of her life into His own until she, too, could say: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."

CHAPTER VI

PREPARATION AND THANKSGIVING

AFTER her First Communion the Little Flower longed for nothing else except to receive her dear Lord. When her Communion feasts came, her elder sister Marie assisted the little motherless child to make ready for these great events on the day preceding. Her words of instruction sank deep into the heart of the Little Flower.

So it is that the seeds of sanctity and of all worthy deeds for Christ and His Church must be carefully sown in the Catholic home itself. Here they will fall upon good soil if father and mother are duly concerned for the souls of their children, and if brothers and sisters perform their duty towards one another. St. Teresa writes:

"On the eve of these happy days Marie helped me to prepare, as she had done for my First Communion. I remember once she spoke

of suffering, and said that in all probability, instead of making me walk by this road, God, in His goodness, would carry me always like a little child. Her words came into my mind next day after my Communion; my heart became inflamed with an ardent desire for suffering, and I felt convinced that many crosses were in store for me. Then my soul was flooded with such consolation as I have never since experienced. Suffering became attractive, and I found in it charms which held me spellbound, though as yet I did not appreciate them to the full.''

It might perhaps be concluded from this passage that, after all, Marie had missed God's intentions in regard to His Little Flower. Naturally, it was not possible for her to penetrate into the Divine councils, but the point is that she had evidently made plain to her little sister the beauty of suffering for the love of God and the rôle it plays in the supernatural life, particularly in the lives of the saints. She had done her part to prepare the way for God's grace to act upon that soul and we behold the Little Flower expanding under the warmth of the Divine Love.

Thus, referring to her thanksgivings after

Communion, St. Teresa describes the state of her soul at this period and reveals the intimate connection in her life between the Cross and the Eucharist:

"I had one other great wish; it was to love God only, and to find my joy in Him alone. During my thanksgiving after Holy Communion I often repeated this passage from the *Imitation of Christ*: 'O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all the consolations of the earth.' These words rose to my lips quite naturally; I said them like a child, who, without well understanding, repeats what a friend may suggest."

Here, incidentally, we note the fruit of her spiritual reading. After the immediate personal influence exercised in the Christian family, nothing is of greater importance in promoting a Catholic spirit within the home than the choice of the literature that is permitted to enter the house. In how many homes is this fact disregarded! Fathers and mothers fail often entirely to carry on, even within the heart of their own family, the all-important apostolate of good reading.

But returning to our subject of Holy Com-

munion, we must not imagine that the saints themselves did not suffer from distractions. Neither did the Little Flower, for all her fervor, find herself free from them. It may do good to holy souls to know that she herself even confesses to often falling asleep "during meditation and thanksgiving after Communion." Weak and tired as she was, nature would have its course, in spite of her best efforts. And it is particularly encouraging to note that she was not distressed at this. She had earnestly tried to do her part, and the Good God understood.

"I reflect," she naïvely writes, "that little children are equally dear to their parents whether they are asleep or awake; that, in order to perform operations, doctors put their patients to sleep; and finally that: 'The Lord knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust.' "

Here we have but another phase of that solid, common-sense piety of the Little Flower that was all based upon the two fundamental realities of the spiritual life—our own helplessness and God's Goodness. On these rests all our confidence in Him. That confidence, combined with love, the Little Flower possessed in a supreme and wonderful degree. It is the great

characteristic of her life. Her trust and tender affection for God were equally deep whether we behold her pierced by the fiery dart of her Divine Lover, or like a little child, falling soundly asleep during her "meditation and thanksgiving after Communion," after valiantly but vainly struggling with all her powers to keep awake. Who knows at which of these two times God's Father-Heart loved her the most?

If in our lives there were nothing to struggle against, if there were no spiritual aridity and desolation in prayer, but our whole existence were one continued series of Divine consolations, where then should we have the chance of really testing our love? How, on such a supposition, could we ever show our courage that shines out brightest amid defeat and failure? Here especially can we become dear to God and win untold graces for ourselves and for the salvation and perfection of the souls of others. The Little Flower never longed for nor expected, and seldom in fact received, sensible spiritual sweetness.

Even when she had reached within the Carmel the heights of love and when her yearning

for God was most intense, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus could still write of herself:

"At the moment of Communion I sometimes liken my soul to that of a little child of three or four, whose hair has been ruffled and clothes soiled at play. This is a picture of what befalls me in my struggle with souls [i. e., in her direction of the novices entrusted to her guidance]. But our Blessed Lady comes promptly to the rescue, takes off my soiled pinafore, and arranges my hair, adorning it with a pretty ribbon or a simple flower . . . Then I am quite nice, and able, without any shame, to seat myself at the Banquet of Angels."

Mary, indeed, Our Blessed Mother, played a great rôle in the Little Flower's Holy Communions. At various times we find her intimately mentioned in this connection. It was this Mother of all purity and tenderness on whom St. Teresa could always rely for help both in her preparation for Holy Communion and in her thanksgiving after receiving Our Divine Lord.

In fact, being completely Mary's child, she knew that her Mother's riches must belong to her also, and so she wished that when Christ

came to her He might simply think He came to Mary's heart. In her very last poem, "Why I Love Thee, Mary," the Little Flower thus expresses this beautiful thought:

"For, O, despite my frailties, Mother dear, thou knowest
I, too, at times, like thee, hold God within my breast.
Should not I tremble at that gift, dear Lord, which Thou bestowest?
Ah, since a mother's treasure is her child's, put fears at rest;
For am I not thy child, O Mary, Mother dear and tender,
And will thy virtues and thy love not plead with God for me:
Then, as the pure white Host comes to my heart in veilèd splendor,
The spotless Lamb will see *thy* charm, and think He visits thee?"

A similar idea is repeated by the Little Flower in the prayer preceding her great "Act of Oblation." Confidently she asks of Almighty God that since all our human works of justice are but blemishes in His eyes and since she had never sought to amass any spiritual riches for

herself, He might deign to clothe her in His own Justice when she finally came to stand before Him, for she would have nothing she could call her own. So now, also, she hoped that on Christ's coming to her in Holy Communion, He would see only His Mother in her child, only the beauty of Mary in Mary's little one. For, as she argued, all a mother's treasures are her child's. These were large aspirations, but God knew how to make them good, since in nothing did the Little Flower ever seek herself, but existed only to give joy to Him.

Would it not be well for us, too, to invoke more frequently Our Blessed Mother's help when preparing to receive her Divine Son? By Mary and the Holy Spirit Christ first came to us, and now too Mary, our Mother, can best prepare us, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to receive Him in the most worthy manner.

In this regard the Little Flower vividly perceived our debt to Mary. Looking into the eyes of the Divine Child in its Mother's arms, St. Teresa could there read the mysteries of both the Cross and the Eucharist—both most intimately connected with that virginal Mother

who nourished for us the Divine Victim of the Cross and gave us the Bread that was to be our eucharistic food. Thus, addressing the Child Jesus at Mary's breast, she puts these thoughts before us:

"Ah, little brother, shielded safe from harm,
In Thy deep eyes Thy future clear I see:
Soon Thou wilt leave for us Thy Mother's arm,
On suffering's path Thy Love is urging Thee,
While round Thy very Cross, fast-fading Flower,
Still clings the fragrance of Thy cradle-throne.
These purple drops recall Thy natal hour:
This Blood drew life from Mary's milk, my Own!"

Yes, and from Mary's heart, too, were drawn the sacred drops of that virginal blood in which was worked by the Most Holy Trinity the great mystery of the Incarnation that gave to us Christ, the Lord—the Same whom daily we now receive in the Holy Eucharist. Surely in the preparation and thanksgiving connected with our Communions, Mary shall have a most intimate part!

But there is another important lesson the Little Flower teaches us, and that is, we must never allow ourselves to imagine that the goodness of our Communion is measured by the degree of *sensible* sweetness and consolation we enjoy. St. Teresa herself, as we have seen, was seldom permitted to enjoy such effects. The clear perception of this truth may be a great source of peace and consolation to souls who may have confused sensible affection in their devotions with true piety. They should learn that their effort to love God with all their strength, and to show this love in their purity of life, in their charity towards their neighbor, and in their zeal for souls is the one thing that alone is of supreme importance.

Here is what the Little Flower has further to say on this point, touching upon her own thanksgivings after Communion:

"What can I tell you, dear Mother, about my thanksgivings after Communion? There is no time when I taste less consolation. But this is what I should expect. I desire to receive Our Lord, not for my own satisfaction, but simply to give Him pleasure."

But she did not for that reason remain inac-

tive. That is abundantly made plain by the description of her efforts after Communion that now immediately follows:

"I picture my soul as a piece of waste ground and beg Our Blessed Lady to take away my imperfections, which are as a heap of rubbish, and to build upon it a splendid tabernacle worthy of Heaven, and adorn it with her own adornments. Then I invite all the angels and saints to come and sing canticles of love, and it seems to me that Jesus is well pleased to see Himself received so grandly, and I share in His joy. But all this does not prevent distractions and drowsiness from troubling me, *and not infrequently I resolve to continue my thanksgiving throughout the day,* since I made it so badly in choir."

That is how the Little Flower knew to turn her very distractions and drowsiness into the greatest occasions of love and virtue. But St. Teresa of the Child Jesus knew also how to obtain from God, during those moments of intimacy after Holy Communion, the supreme favors that she desired. Thus, for instance, she tells us that at one and the same time she received from Our Lord after Communion the

Teresa at prayer in her room.

two gifts which she then most earnestly desired: the assurance that her father had gone "straight to Heaven" without any Purgatory, and the admission of her sister Celine into the Carmel, in spite of what before had proved to be an insurmountable obstacle.

"One day when matters were going from bad to worse," she writes in reference to the opposition against Celine's entrance into the Carmel, "I said to Our Lord after Holy Communion: 'Thou knowest, dear Jesus, how earnestly I have desired that the trials my father endured should serve as his purgatory. I long to know if my wish is granted. I do not ask Thee to speak to me, I only wish a sign. Thou knowest how much opposed is Sister N. to Celine's entering; if she withdraw her opposition, I shall regard it as an answer from Thee, and in this way I shall know that my father went straight to Heaven.'"

When Teresa had completed her thanksgiving, the first person she met was no other than this very Sister, who with tears in her eyes mentioned her earnest desire for Celine's entrance into the Carmel, which before she had so persistently opposed. So God had granted his Lit-

tle Flower both her great wishes in one: "Now I have no desire left," she exclaimed, "unless it be to love Jesus even unto folly." Part of that sacred "folly" was her desire to make Him loved over all the earth and to the end of time. And that wish, too, Jesus was to fulfil for her.

Another of the great lights granted her in connection with her thanksgiving after Communion touches intimately upon the consuming zeal for souls wherewith Jesus filled her heart. She thus writes:

"One day, after Holy Communion, He made me understand these words of the Canticle: 'Draw me: we will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments.' O my Jesus, there is no need to say: 'In drawing me draw also the souls that I love'; these words, 'Draw me,' suffice. When a soul has let herself be taken captive by the inebriating odor of Thy perfumes she cannot run alone. As a natural consequence of her attraction towards Thee, the souls of all those she loves are drawn in her train. Just as a torrent carries into the depths of the sea all that it meets on its way, so, my Jesus, does the soul who plunges into the

shoreless ocean of Thy Love bring with it all its treasures. My treasures are the souls it has pleased Thee to unite with mine."

What may not our own souls accomplish if after Holy Communion, when Jesus is so close to us, we too ask Him with such fervor to draw us into the fires of His love, and to unite us so closely to Himself that we, as it were, may no longer live, but He alone may always live and act in us. That precisely was the prayer of St. Teresa and hence she could say: "I feel that the more the fire of love consumes my heart, so much the more shall I say: 'Draw me!' and the more also will souls who draw near me run swiftly in the same sweet odor of the Beloved." Which of us may not be able to speak these same words if we will allow ourselves to be consumed by the same fire of love? We, too, like the saints, could move the world:

"They lean on God's almighty power itself and their lever is the prayer that inflames with love's fire. With this lever they have raised the world—with this lever the saints of the Church Militant still raise it, and will raise it to the end of time."

Such was the faith, the hope, the love of the

Little Flower. Her words shall be verified in us also if by Mary's aid we draw without limit our love and zeal from the Heart of Christ in the Eucharist. But there is one caution to which attention has already been called: we must know how to leave God for the sake of God, when duty calls us. Yet, after all, we can never be nearer to Him than precisely when we are doing for pure love of Him the task He has set us to do, for just that moment, in our state of life. Rather should we shorten our thanksgivings than in the slightest fall short of the perfect accomplishment of our own day's work. Here also the Little Flower can wisely teach us her lesson of a perfect and judicious, as well as a consuming love.

Referring to the last sickness of St. Teresa, one of her former novices has this little fact to narrate:

"In the infirmary," she says, "we scarcely waited for the end of her thanksgiving before seeking her advice. At first this somewhat distressed her, and she would make gentle reproaches, but soon she yielded to us, saying: 'I must not wish for more rest than Our Lord. When He withdrew into the desert after preach-

ing, the crowds would come and intrude upon His solitude. Come, then, to me as much as you like; I must die sword in hand, *the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*'"

But the great danger of our day is of quite a different nature. It is more likely to consist in a neglect of the fitting preparation and thanksgiving. Many rush from church when Mass is scarcely concluded, and few seem to give to Our Lord another short quarter of an hour, spent in thanksgiving after the Holy Sacrifice. Lack of proper instruction may often, partly at least, account for this lamentable condition.

Surely, we should consider such conduct scant courtesy even to an ordinary visitor. Yet in Holy Communion it is Christ who is our Divine Guest. Considering merely the greatness of this event, a lifetime of preparation would not suffice for it, and a thousand lifetimes of thanksgiving were an entirely inadequate return.

Besides, what folly it is on our part to treat in so beggarly a manner the Guest who comes to spend His graces and His favors upon us! How much wiser the children of this world are in their own generation!

On the other hand, no idle fears or vain scruples should ever keep us from receiving Our Dear Lord. This is a point whose explanation I must leave to the following chapter, on Frequent Communion. Neither, however, should we allow our Communions to become merely a matter of routine—to lose for even a single day their newness and their wonder.

But mere lack of time for a more suitable preparation and thanksgiving should never hold us back from Holy Communion. Jesus is fully satisfied provided we have tried to do our best. It is not then our fault that we cannot give Him our more exclusive attention. Our preparation can begin when we are rising and dressing, and our thanksgiving may continue while perhaps we are hurrying off to meet some pressing duty or obligation. We may even be far more pleasing to Our Divine Lord when we thus prove to Him our sincere love amid such unavoidable distractions, than had we been left to the quiet of an undisturbed devotion.

Then, too, a remote preparation before Communion, and thanksgiving thoughts of grateful love during the course of the day are always

possible. So we can always remain most beautifully united with Him. We have already seen an example of this in the instance of the Little Flower. We have a similar example in St. Aloysius, whose life was cast in a time when men were far less favored than we in regard to the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist. His custom, we are told, was to spend the day preceding his Holy Communions in preparation for them, and the day following, in ardent thanksgiving amid whatever duties his vocation imposed on him.

In one word, let us show, as best we can, a true love for Our Jesus who comes to us in His Blessed Sacrament. That secret the Little Flower can most admirably teach us.

CHAPTER VII

FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION

POPE PIUS X, as is well known, entertained a profound admiration for the Little Flower of Jesus.

"This book," he wrote of the volume containing her account of her own life, "wherein shine forth the virtues of Sister Teresa of Lisieux, and into which it may be said that her whole soul has passed, has been to Us a source of most sweet joy. Verily she has blossomed as a lily, and she has shed abroad the lily's pleasing perfume. She has put forth a rich fruitage of Divine Grace, and praised to the full her Lord, and blessed Him in His works."

What in a particular manner attracted the attention of this great Pope of the Blessed Sacrament was the clearness and correctness of her views on frequent Communion. Aided by the spiritual insight God granted her, she had marvelously anticipated the teaching upon this

subject contained in the Pontifical Decrees. Questions on which famous theologians and great ascetic writers had gone astray, she answered with perfect accuracy and without the slightest doubt or hesitation.

"I compared directors," she writes, "to mirrors who faithfully reflect Our Saviour to the souls under their care, and I thought that in my case He did not use an intermediary, but acted directly." Christ indeed was her one best Teacher.

Yet her own soul, too, was led only gradually to that high degree of knowledge and Divine wisdom which it was finally to possess. Thus, during her earlier life, she had made it her practice to go to Holy Communion as often as her confessor allowed her, but never to ask for leave to go more frequently. This she afterwards acknowledged to have been a course of conduct she would not again have pursued. Yet Our Divine Lord, who knew the ardent desire of His little spouse to receive Him with the utmost frequency, gave Himself to her more often than she should have dared to hope for. Permission was granted her by her confessor,

"Come to my heart, O Sacrament adored,
Come to my heart! it craveth but for Thee."

of his own accord, to receive her Divine Lord several times a week.

"Now," she was later to explain, "I should act differently, for I am convinced that a soul ought to disclose to her director the longings she has to receive her God. *He does not come down from Heaven each day in order to remain in a golden ciborium*, but to find another heaven, the heaven of our souls in which He takes such delight."

These lines were written long before the Decree on Frequent and Daily Communion. The power of the confessor in this regard has since then been greatly diminished.

Provided that the soul, upon prudent reflection or inquiry (1) is not conscious of any mortal sin, and (2) has a right intention in approaching the Holy Table—such as the simple desire of a closer union with her Divine Lord, or the wish to find in this great Sacrament a remedy for her faults and defects—then, as is now clear, no confessor or director can refuse her the right of daily Communion. Not the confessor, but the Holy See has bestowed this privilege, or rather has restored in this regard the practice of the Early Church. The con-

fessor's office is to aid in securing the proper assurance that these two simple conditions, so easily within the reach of all the Faithful who have attained the use of reason, are really present.

But, to return to the Little Flower's argument. Someone may be inclined to answer:

"It was all well and good for her to speak of her Divine Lord not coming upon our altars to remain in a golden ciborium, but to find 'another heaven' within her loving and innocent breast. Such is not the case in my regard. How can I speak of His coming to the 'heaven of my soul' when I am still so often stained with venial sins and at all events conscious of defects of every kind?"

Such reasoning has misled many souls and deprived them of the greatest graces. They forget that the Divine Saviour would come to them not because they are sinless and saintly, but rather because of their very weakness and misery. It has been definitely decided by Pope Pius X that Holy Communion is not a reward of virtue. It is on the contrary, a Divine remedy as well as a source of innumerable graces. Christ still comes as the Good Samari-

tan and the heavenly Physician to heal our souls. Though cleansed in the Sacrament of Penance from mortal sin, if such had been committed, they are still suffering from many spiritual ailments which call for the Divine compassion of Our Lord. It is His happiness now, as of old in Galilee, to cure the sick and lame and blind who eagerly implore His help. This is His delight. It is His eucharistic heaven within our souls. Surely, then, it is not difficult for anyone, possessed of good will, to have the right dispositions wherewith daily to receive Our Lord in His Sacrament of Love.

There are souls, however, who through a mistaken notion of humility would at times deprive themselves of the daily reception of their Lord, as an act of penance or humiliation for some fault they have committed. Spiritual directors have in the past even counseled such a course. Yet this, as we now know, was due to a misguided piety, however well-intentioned it may have been.

How clearly the Little Flower understood this truth is plain from the answer she gave to one who believed that she had caused her great pain. To show the depth of her repent-

ance the offender intended to deprive herself of Holy Communion and wrote her resolution to Sister Teresa. The following was the reply she received:

"Little flower, most dear to Jesus, by this humiliation your roots are feeding upon the earth. You must now open wide your petals, or rather lift high your head, so that the Manna of the Angels may, like a Divine dew, come down to strengthen you and supply all your wants."

The Divine Lord had accepted the humiliation practised by her in thus confessing her fault and repenting of it, but He did not wish her to deprive herself of the heavenly food which she so greatly needed. By her humiliation she had struck her roots deep into the dark earth, but to grow and flourish and blossom into beauty she needed in greatest abundance the Divine Dew from Heaven. She must never forego that Manna of Angels.

But the depth of spiritual insight possessed by the Little Flower of Jesus is shown particularly in a letter to her cousin Marie Guérin. This document which Pope Pius X declared to be "most opportune," is, in fact, one of the most

valuable contributions to the literature on Frequent and Daily Communion. It is filled with joy and consolation for every soul that truly loves her Eucharistic God, but it is especially to be studied and applied by pious yet timid communicants in the hour of temptation. Let them remember that it bears no less an *Imprimatur* than that of the Holy See. Verily to His little ones has God revealed His wisdom; for Teresa was only fifteen years of age when this letter was penned by her. Though doubtless familiar to many readers, its importance is sufficient warrant for quoting it here in its entirety.

Letter to Marie Guérin

"Before you confided in me, I felt that you were suffering, and my heart was one with yours. Since you have the humility to ask advice of your little Teresa, this is what she thinks: You have grieved me greatly by abstaining from Holy Communion, because you have grieved Our Lord. The devil must be very cunning to deceive a soul in this way. Do you not know, dear Marie, that by acting thus you

help him to accomplish his end? The treacherous creature knows quite well that when a soul is striving to belong wholly to God he cannot cause her to sin, so he merely tries to persuade her that she has sinned. This is a considerable gain, but not enough to satisfy his hatred, so he aims at something more, and tries to shut out Jesus from a tabernacle which Jesus covets. Unable to enter this sanctuary himself, he wishes that at least it remain empty and without its God. Alas, what will become of that poor little heart? When the devil has succeeded in keeping a soul from Holy Communion he has gained all his ends . . . . . while Jesus weeps! . . .

"Remember, little Marie, that this sweet Jesus is there in the Tabernacle expressly for you and you alone. Remember that He burns with the desire to enter your heart. Do not listen to Satan. Laugh him to scorn, and go without fear to receive Jesus, the God of peace and of love.

"'Teresa thinks all this,' you say, 'because she does not know my difficulties.' She does know, and knows them well; she understands everything, and she tells you confidently that you can go without fear to receive your only true Friend. She, too,

has passed through the martyrdom of scruples, but Jesus gave her the grace to receive the Blessed Sacrament always, even when she imagined she had committed great sins. I assure you I have found that this is the only means of ridding oneself of the devil. When he sees that he is losing his time he leaves us in peace.

"In truth it is impossible that a heart which can only find rest in contemplation of the Tabernacle—and yours is such, you tell me—could so far offend Our Lord as not to be able to receive Him. . . . What does offend Jesus, what wounds Him to the Heart, is want of confidence.

"Pray much that the best portion of your life may not be overshadowed by idle fears. We have only life's brief moments to spend for the Glory of God, and well does Satan know it. This is why he employs every ruse to make us consume them in useless labor. Dear sister, go often to Holy Communion, go very often—that is your one remedy."

The question will naturally be asked here: "Was the Little Flower of Jesus herself a daily communicant?"

In desire she doubtless was, in as far as she

yearned to receive her Eucharistic God as often as might possibly be granted her. There were no false fears to keep her away from Him and there was no want of love that might have hindered this daily union. She wished that Christ might not only come to her most frequently in His Sacrament of Love, but that He might constantly dwell within her as He is ever present in the Holy Tabernacle.

"I cannot receive Thee in Holy Communion as often as I should wish," she explained, "but, O Lord, art Thou not all-powerful? Abide in me as Thou dost in the Tabernacle—never abandon Thy little victim."

She tells us elsewhere that after the second visit of Our Lord to her she longed for nothing else but to receive Him. "Alas, the feasts seemed so far apart!" Even before her entrance into the Carmel, however, the unexpected permission was granted her, as we have seen, of approaching the Holy Table several times a week.

But the privilege of Daily Communion itself was apparently enjoyed by her for a certain period only during her Religious life. An

epidemic of influenza was, at the time, raging in the Community, and the Sisters were dying about her. She herself was overtasked with work; but her Divine Spouse remembered her lovingly in that season of trial. Her yearning for Him was satisfied:

"During all these long and trying weeks," she writes, "I had the unspeakable consolation of receiving Holy Communion every day. How sweet it was! For a long time Jesus treated me as a spoiled child, for a longer time than His more faithful spouses. He came to me daily for several months after the influenza had ceased, a privilege not granted to the Community. I had not asked this favor, but I was unspeakably happy to be united day after day to my Beloved."

Do we not blush for our own coldness and indifference as we read these lines? How have we shown in the past our appreciation for the inexpressible privilege accorded to us of receiving Our Divine Lord each day—not for a few brief months, like the Little Flower, but all our lives? How gladly and fervently would she have availed herself of such a favor! Surely

we are the spoiled children of God's mercy and love.

There is much food here for reflection and meditation. Well for us if we strive to enter into the sentiments of the Little Flower of Jesus and seek henceforth to do what she would have done in our place!

Would, too, that we might have the consuming love with which she received her Divine Lord. Of that moment itself she sings:

"When in Thy perfect love—O moment blest and bright!—
Thou comest, Spouse most pure, to change me into Thee,
That union of our hearts, that rapture of delight,
O, here is Heaven for me!"

And yet that meeting of the Bridegroom with His bride was by no means always to be accompanied or followed by sensible sweetness. Instead we have seen her left to struggle with desolation and distractions and even with all the overpowering forces of physical weakness and weariness in the periods that preceded and

followed her Holy Communions. But these difficulties merely made more glorious the victory of her "perfect love."

From August 16 to September 30, the day of her blessed entrance into Heaven, she was unable even once to receive her Divine Lord. "Yet few," as her Mother Prioress writes, "have hungered for the Bread of Angels like this seraph of earth. Again and again during that last winter of her life, after nights of intolerable pain, she rose at early morn to partake of the Manna of Heaven, and she thought no price too heavy to pay for the bliss of feeding upon God."

On the very night preceding the last feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel that she was to celebrate here upon earth, July 16, 1897, she still labored to compose the following verses, which express the longing of her soul for her Eucharistic Lord and were to be sung before Holy Communion:

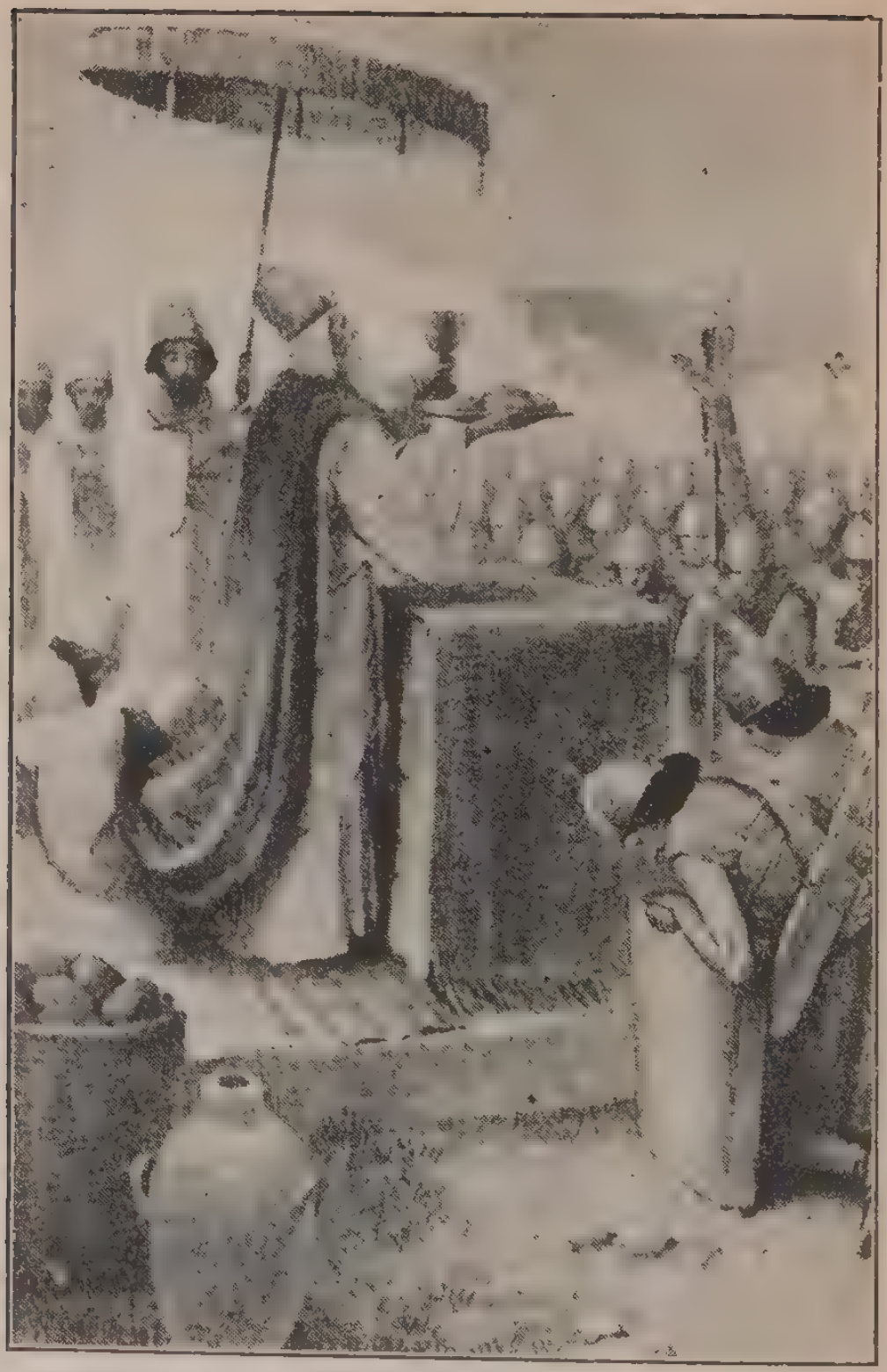
"Thou knowest the baseness of my soul, O Lord,
Yet fearest not to stoop and enter me.
Come to my heart, O Sacrament adored,
Come to my heart! it craveth but for Thee.

And when Thou comest, straightway let me
die
Of very love for Thee. This boon impart!
O, hearken, Jesus, to my suppliant cry:
Come to my heart!"

We note here, blended with an ardent longing for Holy Communion, a no less eager yearning for her heavenly union with God. Well it was that for the blessed moment when the Viaticum was brought to her, the cloisters were thickly strewn with wild flowers and rose-petals, that Jesus might fittingly come to the little Victim of His Love, the Divine Spouse to the bride that so longed to receive Him. She herself had now but one wish left: to die of love for Him that she might then straightway begin her great mission of love upon earth—to make Him loved by others as she herself had loved Him here.

PART III

THE OFFERING OF MELCHISEDECH



"Melchisedech, the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the Most High God, blessed Abraham."—Gen. xiv. 18.

CHAPTER VIII

ST. TERESA AND THE PRIESTHOOD

SELDOM was the high vocation of the priesthood so perfectly understood and so profoundly appreciated as in the home of the Little Flower. The desire of the parents that a child might be born to them who would become both a priest and a missionary was apparently left unanswered only that their longings might be fulfilled in far more wonderful ways.

A reply, indeed, was vouchsafed to their prayers, but the hopes it raised, like bright blossoms of an early spring, were not to reach fruition. After the birth of their four eldest daughters the parents earnestly entreated St. Joseph for a son to whom God might give the great twofold vocation of the priesthood and the foreign missions. In direct response to their petitions they received their first boy, whom they gratefully named Marie Joseph.

But it was not long before they understood

that he was meant for Heaven and not for this earth. For five months he gladdened the hearts of his parents by his sweet ways, then finally God took the child to Himself. The parents, nothing daunted, renewed their prayers and tears. Soon another Joseph was given them. This time surely their prayers would be fully answered! But nine months passed and then Heaven claimed him also. Without in any way losing their trust in God the good parents bowed to His will and left themselves entirely in the hands of His Providence.

God was to answer their prayers in the fullest measure, but in a manner they could not possibly understand. St. Joseph has never been appealed to in vain. The child vouchsafed to them in place of the priest and missionary was the little Teresa whom all the world was to know as the Little Flower of Jesus. We may therefore look upon her as in a special way St. Joseph's gift to her parents and to us.

She was not to be a priest of God, but her particular vocation would be to pray for priests. She was to obtain for God—who indeed can doubt it!—not one priest only, but numberless

vocations. She was to labor for the increase of sanctity and zeal in the souls of the Lord's anointed, and to become, in fact, a special patron for seminarists and priests throughout the world. More even than all this, she was to give her promise that after her death she would come back to assist priests and missionaries. And so her work will continue to the end of time. "No," she exclaimed, "there can be no rest for me until the end of the world."

Most magnificently, then, were those prayers to St. Joseph to be answered, and for all eternity her happy parents might rejoice in the countless priests and missionaries with whom they might claim a special spiritual tie in God's loving dispensation.

No prayer, if made with the proper disposition, is ever lost. An answer is sure to be given, though we may not always comprehend it here. In the latter case, indeed, our merit is all the greater because we then bow in humility and blind confidence to God's inscrutable but infinitely loving Providence. God rewarded Abraham for his confidence, and so the parents of the Little Flower were to receive

"Would each anointed priest might be
Like Seraphim beyond the skies!"

their great reward, though in Heaven only could they fully understand. How could they ever, here on earth, have conceived of what was held in store for them!

Supreme respect for the sublime sacerdotal dignity and devotion to the missionary cause never lessened in that happy home. Each year father and mother set aside a notable proportion of their income for the foreign missions, and in future years the Little Flower was to take, both in life and after death, the strongest interest in them. Her heart, too, has gone out in a special way to the Holy Childhood Association for the rescue and education of children in pagan lands.

The Little Flower's own readiness to set out for the distant foreign missions is well known to us:

"Ever since I came to the Carmel," she wrote, "I have thought that if Our Lord did not take me quickly to Heaven, my lot would be that of Noe's dove, and that one day He would open the window of the Ark and bid me fly to heathen lands, bearing the olive branch. This thought has helped me to soar above all created things."

But it is with the priesthood only that we are here concerned. Even as a child the dignity of that vocation had been profoundly impressed upon her and the sublime position it occupies in the Divine designs. As the minister of the Sacraments, the priest was for her in very truth the intermediary of God. Thus her first confession was to remain for the Little Flower "a very sweet memory" throughout her life.

"Teresa, darling," her sister Pauline had instructed her for this occasion, "it is not to a man but to God Himself that you are going to tell your sins." Man is the intermediary, but it is to God ultimately that the sins are confessed. It is at the Throne of His Infinite Mercy that the penitent casts himself to receive the absolution of the priest, through which Heaven cleanses away his sins. Wonderful is this interplay of Heaven and Earth, perceived by the eyes of Faith alone, but comprehended with remarkable clearness by this child of grace. Adverting to her sister's instruction, Teresa remarks:

"I was so persuaded of this that I asked her quite seriously if I should not tell Father Ducel-

lier that I loved him 'with my whole heart,' as it was really God I was going to speak to in his person.

"Well instructed as to what I was to do, I entered the confessional, and turning round to the priest, so as to see him better, I made my confession and received absolution in a spirit of lively faith—my sister having assured me that at this solemn moment the tears of the Holy Child Jesus would purify my soul. I remember well that he exhorted me above all to a tender devotion to Our Lady, and I promised to redouble my love for her who already filled so large a place in my heart."

Her playfulness mingled sweetly with her reverence, and both alike made her dear to God and men. Leaving the confessional, where the priest had also blessed her Rosary, she felt more joyous and light-hearted than ever before.

"It was evening, and as soon as I got to a street lamp, I stopped and took the newly blessed Rosary out of my pocket. 'What are you looking at, Teresa, dear?' asked Pauline. 'I am seeing what a blessed Rosary looks like.' This childish answer amused my sisters very much."

But, as she adds, she was deeply impressed by the graces she had received and was eager to avail herself of the future opportunities for receiving the Sacrament of Penance, "for these confessions filled me with joy."

Appreciating so greatly the Divine power of the Sacraments of the Church, she could not but realize most perfectly, from childhood up, the sublime function of the human being chosen by God and empowered by Him to administer them to his fellow mortals. Angels themselves, Seraphim and Cherubim, might envy the priest the sacred intimacies allowed him in handling, bearing and communicating to others the Divine Word of God Incarnate, truly present under the sacramental species of the bread and wine.

How greatly, then, must that concept of the well-nigh inconceivable dignity of the sacred priesthood have increased in her with the study of the works of her great Patroness St. Teresa. Even from her earliest days her father had been most careful that she should not lose any word of instruction that could give her a more adequate knowledge of that great patron Saint whom he had given her for a model, for an incentive to holiness and for a perpetual inter-

cessor in Heaven, and to whom in turn she was to give her own loving devotion on earth. We may remember how, when the name of St. Teresa was mentioned in the pulpit, this venerable old man was wont to turn to the little daughter at his side, and quietly whisper to her that she must listen attentively: "He is speaking of your holy Patroness."

The ardor of St. Teresa for raising up to God saintly and learned priests by the prayer, penance and labor of her nuns must have wholly possessed the soul of her who was to be recognized by the Church, in so brief a time, as another St. Teresa. Hence, the following passages on the priesthood, taken from the works of her heavenly Patroness and her Mother in the Religious life, may be regarded as written also out of the very heart of the Little Flower:

* * * * *

"What appears to me to be the essence of the greatness of the priest, the groundwork and very substance of sacerdotal grace, is the sublime and Divine union in which Jesus enters with such a soul, a union so close and so inti-

mate that human language can only repeat, the priest is another Christ."

* * * * *

"The priest is eminently the son of the Most Blessed Trinity. The Father shares with him His Divine paternity, in using his voice to give sacramental being to His Son. The Son makes him the instrument and dispenser of His sacred word. The Holy Ghost communicates to him the fulness of His gifts and lights, His Divine love, in order that he may have the power, efficaciously to touch souls, to enlighten them, to guide them safely, to take complete hold of them by Divine Love, so as to detach them from earth, to which everything attaches them."

* * * * *

"I was suddenly filled with awe at the sight of the greatness and dignity of the priesthood. I could see that the priest is but an outward appearance, behind which is hidden the sacred Person of God the Son, the Word made Flesh, to continue His life wholly consecrated to God His Father and to souls. The priest is another Christ, and only two loves ought to consume his life and devour his heart: the love of the glory

of the Most Holy Trinity, because of the relationship which he bears to the three adorable Persons; and love of souls, whom God at the moment of his ordination committed to his hands to be their father, giving him, so to speak, over them power of life and death. It seems to me that the greatest misfortune of the priest is to show himself too much a man, and not to consider himself, as he is, separated from and elevated above the entire creation, and thus bound to have with it none but Divine relations. As God is his inheritance, he ought also to be the inheritance of God, the faithful companion of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and the defender of His Divine rights, the unwearied propagator of His honor."

* * * * *

Who could have realized with a more living faith the truth of those profoundly penetrating words than the Little Flower, and what soul could have surpassed her own in the burning wish that all priests might be consumed with a zeal worthy of their priceless vocation! In impassioned fervor she begs her Jesus to light His holiest fires "within the breast of each

anointed priest, and on the lips of the Christ Child Himself," in her "Angels of the Crib," she places the eager wish:

"Would each anointed priest might be
  Like Seraphim beyond the skies,
What time he comes to offer Me
  My pure and holy Sacrifice."

But not content with expressing her desire, she points out the means to be employed by faithful souls in helping to bring about its more complete realization:

"To work such miracle of grace
  It needs must be that night and day
Souls near the altar seek a place
  To watch and suffer, weep and pray."

To this service she herself was to be especially dedicated by her very vocation. "I have come to save souls, and especially to pray for priests," was the answer to be given by her in her examination before profession. It was through suffering, in particular, that she hoped to attain this end, and since it was by crosses, as she understood, that Our Lord meant to give

her souls, the more crosses she met with, the stronger grew her attraction for suffering.

It was not long before God gave her in reality her first priest brother, and this through the special intervention of St. Teresa. In glowing words the Little Flower describes that great event which filled all her soul with a music as of heavenly choirs. "For years," she says, "I had cherished a longing which seemed impossible of realization—to have a brother a priest." Often she thought of the joy it would have given her heart had her little brothers lived and she could have witnessed the happy day when she might see them at the altar. Yet God, as she says, went far beyond her desires.

It was in 1895 that her holy Mother, St. Teresa, gave the first priest brother to her. A young seminarist had been inspired by the Saint to ask for a Sister who would devote herself in a particular way to his salvation and that of his future flock. In return, he promised to remember her in every Holy Mass that he should say. The choice fell on Sister Teresa.

"Dear Mother," she writes, "I cannot tell you how happy this made me. Such unlooked-for fulfilment of my desire awoke in my heart the

joy of a child; it carried me back to those early days when pleasures were so keen that my heart seemed too small to contain them. Years had passed since I had tasted a like happiness, so fresh, so unfamiliar, as if forgotten chords had been stirring within me."

Later a second brother was to be given to her, and when she feared her merits had already been offered to one future apostle and so could not be given to another, she was told that obedience would double them in value. "In the depths of my heart," she remarks, "I thought the same thing, and, since the zeal of a Carmelite ought to embrace the whole world, I hope, with God's help, to be of use to even more than two missionaries. I pray for all, not forgetting our priests at home, whose ministry is quite as difficult as that of the missionary preaching to the heathen."

But not content with devoting her attention to these priest brothers in particular, she was of course incessant in her prayers for the souls of priests in general. "Celine," she had written to her sister in 1889, "during the fleeting moments that remain to us, let us save souls! I feel that Our Spouse asks us for souls—*above*

all for the souls of priests . . . It is He who bids me tell you this."

But the most striking passage is that which occurs in a letter written to this same sister of her soul August 15, 1892. She there discusses the words of Jesus to His disciples: "Lift up your eyes and see the fields, for they are already white for the harvest," and those other words: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send forth laborers." Because of God's love for us, she argues, He who is all-powerful wishes us to share in all He does. "The Creator of the Universe awaits the prayer of a poor little soul to save a multitude of other souls, ransomed, like her, at the price of His Blood," and then she launches forth into what for devout souls is one of the most consoling passages in her writings:

"Our vocation is not to go forth and reap in Our Father's fields. Jesus does not say to us: 'Look down and reap the harvest.' Our mission is even more sublime. 'Lift up your eyes and see,' saith our Divine Master, 'see how in Heaven there are empty thrones. It is for you to fill them . . . You are as Moses praying

on the mountain, so ask Me for laborers and they shall be sent. I only await a prayer, a sigh!' Is not the apostolate of prayer—so to speak—higher than that of the spoken word? *It is for us by prayer to train workers who will spread the glad tidings of the Gospel and who will save countless souls—the souls to whom we shall be spiritual Mothers. What, then, have we to envy in the priests of the Lord?"*

Could anything be more encouraging! And what soul cannot participate in that work? What a wonderful apostolate is here pointed out for all who ardently love Our Divine Lord! What a glorious mission, to plead with Him upon His holy mountain—before the Tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament—for the souls of men, for vocations to the holy priesthood, for an army of spiritual workers to carry on the great mission of the Church, and for their constantly increasing perfection and more consuming love! So the flames of zeal, kindled from the furnace of the Sacred Heart, shall at last enwrap the earth.

Much and often did the Little Flower think of the holy priesthood. "The vocation of a priest!" she exclaims, "with what love, my

Jesus, would I bear Thee in my mind when my word brought Thee down from Heaven! With what love would I give Thee to souls!" And yet she could also admire and even feel drawn to imitate the humility of St. Francis of Assisi in refusing the sublime dignity of the priesthood, if this might have been offered her.

The relation of the priest to Our Blessed Lady, as the promoter of her honor and glory, also deeply impressed the Little Flower. "O, how I love Our Blessed Lady!" she exclaimed. "Had I been a priest, how I would have sung her praises!" She beholds Our Lady herself standing beneath the Cross of Christ and offering up her Divine Son:

"As a priest before God's altar
At the Cross so thou didst stand."

Our Lady must not be regarded as performing sacerdotal functions, but the comparison is here drawn between the priest offering up the Divine Sacrifice and Mary offering up the same Divine Victim by the oblation she makes of Him to the Eternal Father for the redemption of the world.

Many are the marvels recorded as worked by St. Teresa of the Child Jesus in favor of seminarists, priests and missionaries. Wonderful cures are ascribed to her and testified to by unquestionable witnesses. But her greatest marvels are those she is constantly working in the hearts and souls of priests by her help and by her intercession. "After my death I shall come back to assist priests and missionaries," was no empty promise. Everywhere throughout the world priestly souls turn to her and receive the help they need. It is no exaggeration to say that one of the greatest powers in the world today is the Little Flower.

CHAPTER IX

OUR SAINT AND HOLY MASS

EVERYTHING connected with the Holy Eucharist had a special attraction for the Little Flower from her earliest years. Nor need we wonder at this when we learn of the fidelity wherewith her own parents daily attended Mass, and the devotion with which they knelt together at the Holy Table when they came to receive their Eucharistic Lord.

Among the earliest memories of the Little Flower was one referring to the *pain bénit* or "blessed bread," which in certain places is blessed at the Offertory of the Mass and given to the Faithful, who may take it with them to their homes. In the primitive Church, as is well known, the sacred Body of Our Lord itself, under the species of small round loaves, was given at Mass into the hands of the communicants. What was not then consumed by them might be taken home when they had communicated; or it might be brought by them to

their brethren in prison for the Faith. These are customs which the Church may change from age to age, as seems best at any given period. But the *pain bénit*, of course, was not consecrated; it was merely blessed.

Even as a tiny child, Teresa was wont eagerly to wait for this bread which her sister Celine brought to her after Mass, and which she knew to be connected with the Holy Sacrifice. She herself tells us:

"On Sundays, as I was still too small to go to the long services, Mamma stayed at home to take care of me. I was always very good, walking about on tip-toe; but as soon as I heard the door open there was a tremendous outburst of joy—I threw myself on my dear little sister, exclaiming: 'Oh, Celine! give me the blessed bread, quick!'"

One day Celine, who was a few years older than Teresa, had for some reason failed to bring it with her. "What was to be done?" the Little Flower writes. "I could not do without it, *for I called this little feast my Mass.*" Then a bright thought struck her.

"You have no blessed bread!" she cried to Celine; "make some!"

Celine at once cut a tiny slice from a loaf, solemnly recited a Hail Mary over it, and then presented it to Teresa, who as promptly made the sign of the Cross over it and so completed the important ceremony. It was then followed by the devout consumption, on her part, of the blessed morsel, which, she naïvely remarks, seemed to taste exactly "like the real blessed bread."

The incident shows what an intense reality the Holy Eucharist and everything connected with it had become to these children from their very babyhood. Teresa, at that time, was only between three and four years of age. In a scene that occurred but shortly after this period we find her, in the absence of her sisters, saying her prayers before her own little altar. Here she had arranged all things to suit entirely her own taste: "Everything was small—candlesticks, vases, and the rest." She was then five years of age.

We can therefore understand with what eagerness the little Teresa attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass itself, especially on the great feasts of the Church. These latter were comparatively rare, it is true, but then each

week brought, as she says, its own great feast, most dear to her, and that was Sunday. "What a glorious day! The Feast of God! The day of rest!" she exclaims.

First of all, on that day, "the whole family went to High Mass." Incidentally, we are here given a charming picture of the father, a venerable old man, leading his little daughter by the hand as they are seeking seats in the nave of the church, and everybody is offering them a place. To her uncle, who called her his "sunbeam," her entrance seemed like a golden ray of God's sunlight penetrating the sacred edifice.

During the sermon she listened attentively to the words of the priest. But the first sermon that she really understood, and which touched her deeply, was one on the Sacred Passion of Our Lord. She was then five and a half years old. After that time, St. Teresa herself assures us, she was fully able to understand and appreciate all instructions.

But, as she remarks, during the course of the sermons, she not seldom looked up into her father's face, where often she might learn more even than from the words of the preacher.

"Sometimes his eyes were filled with tears which he strove in vain to hold back; and as he listened to the eternal truths he seemed no longer of this earth, his soul was absorbed in the thoughts of another world."

It was on a Sunday also, at the end of Mass, that the picture of Our Lord on the Cross half slipped out of the prayer-book she had evidently been using for her devotion, and there was disclosed to her sight one of the Divine hands, with the Sacred Blood streaming from its wound:

"I felt an indescribable thrill, such as I had never felt before. My heart was torn with grief to see that Precious Blood falling to the ground, and no one caring to treasure It as It fell, and I resolved to remain continually in spirit at the foot of the Cross, that I might receive the Divine Dew of Salvation and pour it forth upon souls. From that day the cry of my dying Saviour—'I thirst!' sounded incessantly in my heart, and kindled therein a burning zeal hitherto unknown to me. My one desire was to give my Beloved to drink; I felt myself consumed with thirst for souls, and I longed at

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any cost to snatch sinners from the everlasting flames of hell."

These thoughts were in perfect harmony with the Holy Sacrifice she had just attended, the continuation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Here was the very same Divine Victim, while the High Priest, offering the Divine Oblation, was none other than Christ Himself. Visible to the people, it is true, was only the ministering priest, yet he spoke the words of consecration, not in his own person, but in that of Christ, who alone was the *Sacerdos Principalis,* the Chief Priest of the Mass: "This is *My* Body," "This is the chalice of *My* Blood."

Connected with the inspirations her Divine Master gave her at the conclusion of this Holy Mass was the thought to devote herself to bring about the salvation of a notorious criminal, Pranzini. Hitherto he had remained entirely impenitent for the murders, because of which he was to be executed, but so strong even then was the Little Flower's confidence in God that she did not hesitate to pray: "My God, I am quite sure that Thou wilt pardon this unhappy Pranzini. I should still think so if he did not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow,

because I have such confidence in Thy unbounded Mercy; but this is my first sinner, and therefore I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me."

That sign was given her, and on the day of the execution, though the criminal had mounted the scaffold in obduracy, without confession or absolution, he suddenly turned around and under a Divine inspiration seized the crucifix which the priest offered him. Three times he kissed the Sacred Wounds, those very Wounds which after Holy Mass Teresa had seen pictured with the Blood streaming from them. God had answered her prayer and given her the sign for which she had asked. She had obtained the conversion of her "first sinner."

"After receiving this grace," she writes, "my desire for the salvation of souls increased day by day. I seemed to hear Our Lord whispering to me as He did to the Samaritan woman: 'Give Me to drink!' It was indeed an exchange of love: upon souls I poured forth the Precious Blood of Jesus, and to Jesus I offered these souls refreshed with the Dew of Calvary. In this way I thought to quench His thirst; but the more I gave Him to drink, so much the

more did the thirst of my own poor soul increase, and I accepted it as the most delightful recompense."

How strikingly all these thoughts and inspirations, which took their origin in the incident following the Holy Mass, are connected with that Divine Sacrifice, which in all reality is the repetition of the Sacrifice of Calvary, offered now in an unbloody manner, but reddened with the memory of that Precious Blood, shed upon the Cross, and here again presented anew to the Eternal Father!

The efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice was illustrated also in the cure of the Little Flower herself from the mysterious and dangerous malady that afflicted her in her childhood. Humanly speaking, there was no hope of recovery. So acute had her condition become that she could not endure even the momentary absence of her sister Marie—except, notably, for the occasions when she left her to attend Mass or to visit their Carmelite sister, Pauline.

One day, the Little Flower, in her extreme illness, overheard her father bidding Marie write to Paris and have a Novena of Masses said at the Shrine of Our Lady of Victory.

THE OFFERING OF MELCHISEDECH

On a Sunday, during this Novena of Masses, when the mysterious sickness reached a most distressing stage, the Little Flower, in union with her sister, Marie, turned to the statue of Our Lady, and there pleaded for help. What followed is thus described by her:

"Suddenly the statue seemed to come to life and grow beautiful, with a divine beauty that I shall never find words to describe. The expression of Our Lady's face was ineffably sweet, tender, and compassionate; but what touched me to the very depths of my soul was her gracious smile. Then, all my pain vanished, two big tears started to my eyes and fell silently."

The Little Flower was cured. Our Lady had smiled upon her and it was during the Novena of Masses said at Mary's shrine.

Five years later, on leaving forever the happy home of her childhood, at the age of fifteen, the Little Flower with her father and all who accompanied them first heard Mass at the chapel of the Carmel. There they were strengthened, for the great sacrifice all were to make, by attending the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. That help was needed,

for no hearts are so tender with human affection as the hearts of the saints.

Her object in the Carmel was to immolate herself for Christ: to die for Him who had died for her, and of whose death the Holy Mass is a perpetual memorial. She saw the rose-leaves drop upon His altar steps, and they were to her an image of her own life which she wished might spend itself for Christ. Beautifully she has expressed her thought in the poem "A Withered Rose." When Jesus first left His Mother's arms, gladly, the Little Flower writes, would she have spread fresh rose-leaves in His path so that His tiny feet might "very softly tread upon a flower." And then she continues:

"These scattered rose-leaves are true image of
a soul,
O Christ most dear!
That longs to immolate itself, complete and
whole,
Each moment here.
On Thy blest altars, Lord, fresh roses fain
would shine,
Radiant near Thee,

They gladly give themselves. Another dream is mine:
To fade for Thee!"

Her position as Sacristan, in particular, brought her close to the Altar and the Holy Sacrifice, whose sacred vessels were entrusted to her care. When her nineteenth birthday was saddened by the death of her Mother sub-Prioress, and other deaths quickly followed, she had single-handed to do all the sacristy work. "I wonder sometimes," she remarks, "how I was equal to it all." With what reverent love must she have performed her task! She herself thus describes her sentiments:

"Great was my joy in being allowed to touch the sacred vessels and prepare the Altar linen on which Our Lord was to be laid. I felt that I must increase in fervor, and I often recalled those sweet words addressed to deacons at their ordination: 'Be ye holy, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.'"

It was a joy for her, too, to receive the flowers for the altar. Her great delight had always been in flowers, and we saw her making little altars among them even in her early

Sister Teresa as sacristan, preparing the sacred vessels.

childhood. On giving herself as a prisoner of love she had sacrificed her rambles over the sunny meadows rich with tints and colors of all the summer blossoms. But God more than repaid her. She never had possessed so many flowers as now were brought to her for her Eucharistic King; and since her happiness consisted solely in giving joy to Him, her delight in these frail creatures of God's love was increased a hundredfold. Charmingly she writes:

"In the world young men present their betrothed with beautiful bouquets, and Jesus did not forget me. For His altar I received, in abundance, all the flowers I loved best: cornflowers, poppies, marguerites—one little friend only was missing, the purple vetch. I longed to see it again, and at last it came to gladden me and show that, in the least as in the greatest, God gives a hundredfold, even in this life, to those who have left all for His Love."

But here, too, her roses were not without thorns and we are told how, when Teresa was with exquisite taste arranging the bouquets for the feast of Mother Prioress, a Sister permitted

herself one of those thoughtless remarks that often may pain others deeply. "It is easy to see," she said, "that the large bouquets have been given by your friends. I suppose those sent by the poor will again be put in the background." Even in Religious houses such unpleasantnesses may occur.

Teresa replied with a sweet smile, and at once put the poor flowers, offered by the servants of the house, in the most conspicuous place. Struck with confusion, the Sister humbly accused herself of her unkindness. But there is a sequel also to this incident, which shows how the saints forgive. For we are told that the same Religious, after Teresa's death, on applying her forehead to the feet of the Saint was instantly cured of cerebral anemia.

Among her verses the Little Flower has left us a special canticle composed for sacristans, entitled "A Work of Love." It bespeaks her reverence for the Divine Sacrifice, enamored as she was of her happy task, which in the Carmel included also the privilege of making the altar-breads that were to be consecrated at Holy Mass. Lovingly she prepared these small hosts, of which she tells us that:

"Heaven will be here, on sinful earth,
When hid beneath these veils of snow;
And God will here, in a new birth,
Come down to dwell with us below."

Queens, in all their state, she jubilantly exclaims, have no happiness to compare with hers, and all their honors are but dross beside her service of the King of Kings. "A holy envy fills our hearts for this fair work of our delight!" Beneath the species of each of these "snow-white hosts," that she so tenderly placed in their golden ciborium, she knew that the Lamb of God would be hidden from sight.

And so the thought of that ciborium, too, suggested to her the beautiful desire of presenting her Jesus with ciboriums filled with souls for Him. Heaven itself becomes to her mind a vast ciborium which her prayers can help to fill with these souls of the elect. And then, in fine, to return to another thought elsewhere expressed by her, is not she herself His own ciborium, lovingly enclosing her Jesus after Holy Communion? "The chosen ciborium am I!"

Her modest verses, quoted here and elsewhere, were written with no wish to challenge the laurels of the world's great poets, yet in their

flight they often rise far nearer to the source of truth than the world's most vaunted art. But prose-poetry of the very highest kind are many of the passages in her Autobiography.

What is more lofty than the picture she there gives us of the Divine Eagle swooping down upon her, His happy prey, to carry off with Him the little Victim of His Love! What could be more sacrificial, and expressive of her oblation in return for the Divine Oblation in the Mass, than these thoughts which follow!

"I am too little for great things, and my folly it is to hope that Thy Love accepts me as victim; my folly it is to count on the aid of Angels and Saints, in order that I may fly unto Thee with Thine own wings, O my Divine Eagle! For as long a time as Thou willest I shall remain—my eyes fixed upon Thee. I long to be allured by Thy Divine Eyes; I would become Love's prey. I have the hope that Thou wilt one day swoop down upon me, and, bearing me away to the Source of all Love, Thou wilt plunge me at last into that glowing abyss, that I may become forever its happy Victim."

How more perfectly, in fine, can we parallel,

in our purely human way, the Divine Oblation of the Son of God in the Holy Mass than with that solemn and direct offering made of herself in the great "Act of Oblation" given at the conclusion of this volume. It is the Mass, as it were, imaged in her life; the unbloody Sacrifice of Calvary, mirrored in her own unbloody immolation.

CHAPTER X

MYSTIC WHEAT AND GRAPES

PARTICULARLY dear to St. Teresa of the Child Jesus were the two eucharistic symbols, wheat and grapes. It is not necessary to suppose here that in her attractions for these symbolic gifts of nature she always consciously adverted to the sacramental idea inseparably connected with them in Christian art. That, as we know, is based on Our Lord's own Divine Institution of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood—whose valid matter for consecration is wheaten bread and wine of the grape.

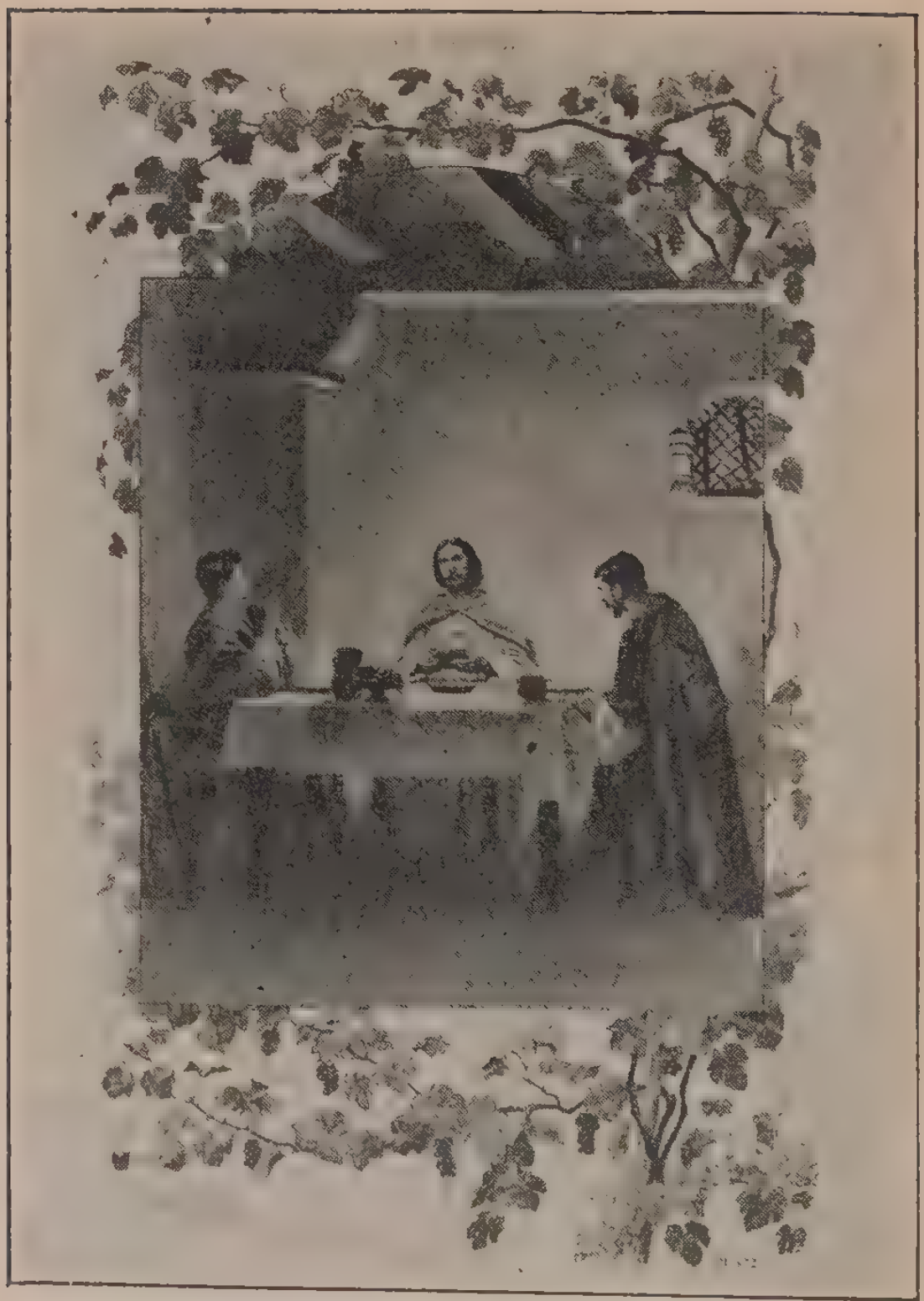
When on a certain occasion someone showed her a rich, full ear of wheat, she at once compared it with her own life, which God had blessed so bountifully. But the sacrificial idea was no less related in her mind with these grains that were to her far more than merely the golden products of the earth's fertility. That sacramental symbolism will be seen beautifully exemplified when later in this chapter we return

to the two concluding stanzas of her poem, "My Wishes before the Tabernacle," the first part of which was quoted in a preceding section.

If her life was indeed an ear of wheat that the Lord had blessed until it increased to the utmost fulness of His bounties, it was also to be ground in the mills of suffering that it might die to itself and undergo, as it were, a sacramental transformation. Thereafter not she would live, but only Christ in her. Not the will of Teresa, but the will and love and zeal of Jesus would rule and guide all her thoughts and being.

In the same way she seems to have been even more profoundly attracted by the sacrificial idea which seemed almost invariably associated in her mind with the symbol of the grapes. Was she not a tiny cluster for which she knew that Christ was yearning and which before long He would come to pluck with His own hands?

"I know," said Teresa, two months before her death, "that just at this moment Our Lord has such a longing for a tiny bunch of grapes, which no one will give Him, that He will perforce have to come and steal it."



"Thy spouse am I, Thy chosen one,
My Well-Beloved, come dwell in me!"

She had begged permission of the Mother Prioress to offer up her life for a certain intention, and the permission had been refused her.

"I do not ask for anything," she added in explanation. "This would be to stray from my path of self-surrender. I only beseech Our Lady to remind her Jesus of the title of "Thief," which He takes to Himself in the Gospels, so that He may not forget to come and carry me away."

Was she not the victim of Divine love, to be consumed by love and die of love: a tiny bunch of grapes reserved entirely for the delight of her Jesus?

"Will the Divine Thief soon come to steal His little bunch of grapes?" someone asked her at another time.

"I see Him in the distance," she replied in her happy playfulness, "and I take good care not to cry out: 'Stop Thief!' Rather, I call to Him: 'This way, this way!'"

What delightful gaiety, like the glint of sunlight upon rippling waters, whose bright surface hides the deepest depths of suffering! Yet it was not suffering that made her desirous of

leaving this earth. She was always prepared to suffer still more, if God so wished it. No wilful desire for death existed on her part, but a firm conviction, divinely inspired, that her mission was really to begin only with her departure from this life.

"I feel that my mission is soon to begin, my mission to make others love God as I love Him . . . to teach souls my *little way*. I will spend my Heaven in doing good upon earth."

The little bunch of grapes must therefore be crushed before it could yield up all its sweetness to the palate of her Beloved. Only after death would she be able to love Him perfectly and to win for Him the love of "a multitude of souls." Only when time would cease to be, was she to rest from making Him loved on earth. Such was her firm belief, which she expressed without the slightest doubt or hesitation:

"No, there can be no rest for me until the end of the world. But when the Angel shall have said: 'Time is no more;' then I shall rest, then I shall be able to rejoice, because the number of the elect will be complete."

And again:

"What attracts me towards our Heavenly Home is the Master's call, the hope of loving Him at last to the fulfilling of all my desire, the thought that I shall be able to win Him the love of a multitude of souls who will bless Him for all eternity. I have never asked God that I may die young. That to me were a cowardly prayer; but from my childhood He has deigned to inspire me with a strong conviction that my life would be a short one."

Whatever longings for an early death had previously possessed her, they were all now absorbed in the one thought of love. "To love Jesus even unto folly," became her sole desire.

"I no longer wish either for suffering or death, yet both are precious to me. Long did I call upon them as the messengers of joy. I have suffered much, and I have thought my barque near indeed to the Everlasting Shore. From earliest childhood I have imagined that the Little Flower would be gathered in its springtime; now the spirit of self-abandonment alone is my guide. I have no other compass, and know not how to ask anything with

eagerness, save the perfect accomplishment of God's designs upon my soul."

But her great joy consisted in knowing that the longing of the Divine Thief for the little bunch of grapes He desired was soon to be satisfied. Beyond this she had no other wish than to love Him, to be loved by Him, and to win Him love. It is all expressed by her in these few words: "To love; to be loved, and to return to earth to win love for our Love. So great was this desire that, in spite of her eagerness to meet her heavenly Bridegroom and greet Him face to face, she yet would have been still more eager to remain here below, even to the end of time, if that had been the only way to continue to make Him loved upon earth.

"I confess," she wrote to a missionary friend, "that if in Heaven I could not labor for His glory I should prefer exile to Home."

Was it the Eucharistic idea which suggested to her that beautiful figure of the little bunch of grapes as the symbol of her life, that was to ripen into perfect sweetness only to be the victim of Divine love? How can we fail to trace a close likeness between the grape that is

crushed for the Holy Sacrifice and that tiny cluster which was to be pressed beneath the Cross and immolated on the altar of love that it might be more perfectly transformed into Christ? This is the comparison expressed in the last stanza of her eucharistic poem, "My Wishes before the Tabernacle." Thus she sings of herself:

"Only one little bunch of grapes
That gladly disappears for Thee,
O Jesus, holy, heavenly Vine,
Thou knowest I rejoice to be!
Beneath the pressure of the Cross
I prove my love for Thee alway
And ask no other joy than this:
To immolate myself each day."

Here, therefore, is given us the key to her secret. Nor is she only Christ's little bunch of grapes. She is to be numbered too among those chosen grains of wheat that are to be most perfectly transformed into Himself. Such is the concluding thought of her Eucharistic song:

"Among the grains of purest wheat,
O happy lot! He chooses me.

We lose our life for Christ, our Love:
What rapturous height of ecstasy!
Thy spouse am I, Thy chosen one,
My Well-Beloved, come dwell in me!
Thy beauty wins my heart, oh come,
Deign to transform me into Thee!"

In this transformation of ourselves into the likeness of Christ we behold one of the greatest effects of Holy Communion. The more lovingly we receive Him and the more perfectly we yield ourselves to Him, the more completely likewise is this transformation brought about. How unquestioning, child-like and confident was the self-surrender of the Little Flower to the will of Almighty God in all things, we well know. In this lay the secret of her boundless power over the Divine Heart of her Spouse, as well as her great spiritual attractiveness which today draws unnumbered souls along with her in the odor of His ointments.

"Yes," she said, attributing to God all the glory, "from the age of three I have never refused our Good God anything."

Nothing, on the other hand, is more admirable than the logic of love by which she fearlessly drew from this her conclusion:

"In Heaven the Good God will do all I desire because I have never done my own will on earth."

This constant fulfilment of the will of God was indeed the most Christ-like trait in her life.

It is the reason why her clients can now rightly place such confidence in her intercession. In the strength of the Bread of Life, which she never lost an opportunity of receiving, and of the Blood of Christ which quickened her and lent to her features that spiritual beauty, she was able to walk on, in baptismal innocence, even unto the mountain of God.

Our Loving Lord often delighted to humor her in the sweetest ways and to show His affection for His little spouse. There is one incident which bears directly upon our subject. It is connected with a poetic monologue written by her for the pious recreation of her fellow-Religious, entitled "The Little Divine Beggar of Christmas."

As acted and sung on her last Christmas day, an angel was made to appear before the assembled Sisters, bearing in his arms the Child Jesus. After asking from them their

tributes of love he placed the Divine Babe in a crib prepared for Him. The angelic visitor then presented to the Mother Prioress, and after her to each of the Sisters in turn, a basket filled with small leaflets. Each contained twelve lines of verse, suggesting some special gift to be bestowed upon the little Divine Beggar who had thus come to them in His helplessness on Christmas day. Flowers, caresses, spiritual bonbons, and a multitude of things were to be given to Him. As each slip was drawn, the angel sang the petition made in it.

Was it a mere chance that out of twenty-eight leaflets in the basket Sister Teresa herself should have drawn the following?

A BUNCH OF GRAPES

"*A bunch of grapes*, oh, give to me,
A sweet refreshing cluster fair,
To moisten the small thirsting lips
Of this dear Babe within my care.

"Your lot, my Sister, oh how blessed!
For *those choice grapes* He asks of *you*
Are in His vineyard to be pressed
To whom the hearts of all are due.

"His tiny hand, like snow-flake white,
Upon your throbbing heart shall lie,
And from all touch of earth's delight
Absorb it into His on high."

Before another Christmas came those grapes had been pressed and the wine of love poured out to delight for all eternity the Heart of God. The small, tiny hand of the Christ Child had rested in love on the throbbing head of His own little Teresa and taken her to Himself.

On the wine-press of the Cross her Saviour had been crushed for her, and the last drop of His Precious Blood had trickled from His Sacred Heart. Daily that same Sacrifice was still renewed. What sweeter desire, then, than to be His tiny bunch of grapes, ripening for Him alone, until the time when His Divine hand should reach out to gather it, that it might yield its sweetness all for Him alone! Not a long life, or a short life, but the will of God was her supreme desire. She wished only to satisfy the longings of His Heart.

But the eucharistic symbol of the wheaten Host was not forgotten, although it was for some other Sister to draw the verses which here follow:

A LITTLE WHITE HOST

"O, see how with each morning's light,
  Jesus, the Child divinely fair,
Into a little snow-white Host
  Transforms Himself that you may share

"His life! And yet, with greater love,
  He longs to change you into Him.
Your heart His precious treasure is,
  His happiness, His joy supreme.

"Noel! Noel! From Heaven He comes
  To fill your soul with glorious light;
The Lamb of God to you descends:
  Now be His pure white host tonight."

To give herself for Christ as Christ gave Himself for her, and still daily continues this oblation of Himself as the Victim of Love in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, was her entire philosophy. But in making this sacrifice with the sweet, smiling, trustful spirit of childhood she added to it a charm that God Himself could not resist.

Let us remember, too, that if she gave Him all, His own gift in return to her was infinitely greater. May we never, then, fear to render

Him the same complete oblation. Whatever we give Him is not lost, but we shall find it again in Him, transformed and multiplied an innumerable number of times by the wonderful arithmetic of His infinite Love.

Love God, trust God, give Him all and yourself with it, then smilingly rest on His Heart of Love—that was her Little Way. Win Jesus by a caress—that was the secret of her spiritual childhood. Offer Him all your little self, be His grain of purest wheat, His bunch of most delicious grapes for which the Heart of Jesus longs—that was her joy supreme. And oh, the love He gave her in return!

PART IV

IN THE HEART OF CHRIST

"A thousand hearts too few would be for my desire,
Give me *Thy* Heart to set my longing heart on fire!"

CHAPTER XI

FLAMES OF THE SACRED HEART

INTIMATELY connected with devotion to the Holy Eucharist is devotion to the Sacred Heart. Before the Blessed Sacrament the great revelations of the Heart of Jesus were made in modern times.

Here St. Margaret Mary was permitted to rest upon the Divine breast, while Our Lord revealed to her "the marvels of His Love and the inexplicable secrets of His Sacred Heart."

Here, while the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for veneration, Christ again appeared to her, "all resplendent in glory, with the five Wounds shining like suns." In His open breast she beheld His "all-loving and all-lovable Heart, the living source of all these flames."

Here, at the same time, was revealed to her the tenderness of that Divine Heart which so longed for our human love and instead had been grieved so greatly by the ingratitude and forgetfulness of men. "If they rendered

Me some return of love, I should esteem all that I have done for them as but little, and would do if it were possible, still more. But they have nothing but coldness and rebuffs for all My eagerness to do them good." And so then the Communion of Reparation on the First Fridays was divinely taught her.

Here, in fine, before the Eucharistic Presence, took place the "Great Apparition" itself, when the institution of a special feast in honor of the Sacred Heart was ordained by Christ. It was to be celebrated on the First Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, "by receiving Communion on that day," as Our Lord Himself explained, "and making it a reparation for all the insults offered to My Heart during the time that it has been exposed on the altars."

It would not, therefore, be possible to make more plain the intimate relation existing between devotion to the Sacred Heart and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. We are not then surprised to find that a special gift of the Little Flower was not merely her devotion to the Holy Eucharist, but also to the Sacred Heart.

Adept in all the lore of Divine love, she was

past-mistress above all things of that Book of Love, the Heart of Jesus.

Aside from the great Revelations made by the Sacred Heart at various times, where else should we go to learn the sweetest intimacies of that Divine Heart, if not to the little Victim of its infinitely Merciful Love?

Who can better teach us the mysteries of love that are hidden in that Heart than the dear Saint to whom in a particular way Jesus delighted to reveal the secrets of His unspeakable tenderness? In a rapture of delight and gratitude she could sing:

> "Mine is Thy Face; mine is Thy Heart;
> Lo, I am wounded by Thy dart!"

Little Teresa was like a flower from a seed wafted into the cranny of the open Heart of Christ by the breath of His own Divine Spirit of Love. There it took root and flourished and opened up into wonderful beauty. Poet never held in his hand flower so fair as that which spread its petals in this sheltered nook, nor did flower ever grow that fed on a soil so rich. Its nourishment was Love.

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, it is true, had none of the remarkable visions granted to St. Gertrude or St. Margaret Mary. Her life, in brief, was to be just such a life as we all may be able to lead in the Sacred Heart.

Yet if it was granted to St. Gertrude and St. Margaret Mary to rest upon the Heart of Jesus, the Little Flower did not envy them this privilege. Could not she herself freely rest on the Heart of her Divine Spouse? Were not His arms her "Lift of Love"?

Precisely because she felt herself to be so weak and little, was Christ prepared to carry her at His breast, and to bear her up in His embrace even to the highest heights of sanctity.

Well she knew that by her own efforts she could never attain those pinnacles of perfection. But for that very reason she had recourse to her invention, since a Saint she was determined to be—yet only by God's infinitely Merciful Love.

Not discouraged, therefore, at her littleness, she set to work to seek out a means of getting to Heaven by a little way, "very short and very straight, a little way that is wholly new." For she argued:

"We live in an age of inventions; nowadays the rich need not trouble to climb the stairs, they have lifts instead. Well, I mean to try and find a lift by which I may be raised unto God, for I am too tiny to climb the steep stairway of perfection."

Turning the pages of Holy Writ she came upon the words: "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me." So drawing near to God, the Scripture bade her—for was she not God's "little one"?—she searched still further to find what next He would do with her, and there she read the glorious answer: "You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees; as one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you."

What did this mean but that henceforth, as God's little one, she should be carried at His own Heart, at the Heart of Christ? Rapturously she writes:

"Never have I been consoled by words more tender and sweet. Thine Arms, then, O Jesus, are the lift which must raise me up even unto Heaven. To get there I need not grow; on the contrary, I must remain little, I must become still less. O my God, Thou hast gone

beyond my expectation, and I . . . 'I will sing Thy mercies! Thou hast taught me, O Lord, from my youth, and till now I have declared Thy wonderful works, and thus unto old age and grey hairs.'"

So the Little Flower, too, was privileged in her own way, not merely to "rest upon His Heart, with His blest Face so nigh," but to be carried at that Divine Heart itself while held in the embrace of His Infinite Love.

No reason, then, could she see for envying St. Margaret Mary, St. Gertrude or even St. John, who all were permitted to rest on the Sacred Heart. Tenderly reminding Jesus of the favor granted to His Beloved Disciple, she exclaims:

"Remember in what rapture of delight
The loved Apostle rested on Thy Heart,
In that deep peace he knew Thy love and might,
Thy mysteries explored and in Thy strength had part.
Yet of Thy favored, John, I feel no jealousy:
I am Thy choice, I too behold Thy mystery,
I too upon Thy breast
May have ecstatic rest!"

And so the privilege granted St. Teresa of the Child Jesus may be shared by all of us, if we will but walk in her way of spiritual childhood. Not merely may we rest upon that Heart of Christ, but like her we may enter into it and there make our home. For this reason it was opened, that we might there make our dwelling place. Eagerly the Little Flower pleads:

"Within Thy Sacred Heart, O let me hide!"

Like bees, laden with sweets, she would have us hasten straight to this Heart and there deposit our good works:

"Make His Heart your hive and home!"

What, then, do we mean by "dwelling in the Sacred Heart"? We mean that we strive to make all our will and wishes, even to the slightest detail, conformable to the will and wishes of the Heart of Christ. So doing, we shall not merely dwell in the Heart of Christ, but also make of our own hearts a garden of delight where, as the Little Flower says, our sweet Saviour can come in turn and take His rest.

What an interchange of heavenly courtesies is thus established between the Creator and His

creature! Let us plant only lilies there, in that garden of our hearts, she counsels, since the joy of the Beloved is to "feed among the lilies," as the Scripture tells us.

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus performed the same ordinary devotions to the Sacred Heart that we perform. She mentions, in particular, the solemn Act of Consecration made by her at Montmartre, in common with the pilgrims in whose company she was leaving for her memorable visit to Rome and the Holy Father. Similarly, we read of her, as a Carmelite nun, being present among the Sisters as they gathered, singing a hymn before the altar of the Sacred Heart. The chronicler of the little incident adds these further details:

"Sister Teresa, who was already wasted by fever, joined them with difficulty, and arrived quite exhausted, being obliged to sit down at once. When the hymn began, one of the Sisters made her a sign to stand up. Without hesitation, the humble child arose, and in spite of the fever and great oppression from which she was suffering, remained standing to the end."

Where others sang the hymn to the Sacred Heart, she indeed joined in with all the fervor

of her soul, but to this she added the touch of the heroic. More was asked of her and she gladly gave it all. In its full perfection she practised her devotion to the Sacred Heart by imitating in all their beauty the virtues of Jesus, "meek and humble of heart." That devotion may be made still more tangible by quoting here the "Morning Prayer," which she herself composed:

"O my God! I offer Thee all my actions of this day for the intentions and for the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I desire to sanctify every beat of my heart, my every thought, my simplest works, by uniting them to its infinite merits; and I wish to make reparation for my sins by casting them into the furnace of its Merciful Love.

'O my God! I ask of Thee for myself and for those whom I hold dear, the grace to fulfil perfectly Thy Holy Will, to accept for Love of Thee the joys and sorrows of this passing life, so that we may one day be united together in Heaven for all eternity. Amen."

The first paragraph of this prayer breathes all the sweetness of the Sacred Heart devo-

"O Heart of Jesus, wealth of tenderness,
My joy Thou art, in Thee I safely hide."

tion, while the second contains the very quintessence of the spiritual life which this devotion promotes, conformity to the will of God.

Again we meet with the mention of the Sacred Heart in the introductory prayer to her great "Act of Oblation" as a Victim of Holocaust of the Divine Love, where she thus expresses her supreme purpose in life: "I wish to labor for Thy love alone, with the sole aim of pleasing Thee, of consoling Thy Sacred Heart, and of saving souls who will love Thee through eternity." Briefly this is summed up in that one object of all her desires: "To love Jesus and to make Him greatly loved." She wished that others, too, should ask this favor for her, and continue to ask it for her even after her death.

The zeal of the Sacred Heart consumed her. For that reason she felt that she could not rest content with any single one of the many possible vocations that suggested themselves to her mind, even though she were called to be a priest, a missionary, an apostle, a Doctor of the Church, or a very martyr for the Faith, which was the summit of her desires.

She could be content with none of these voca-

tions because she wished in her zeal to embrace them all. She wished to suffer and die, not in one martyrdom only, but in all the martyrdoms that had ever been or ever were to be to the end of time. She wished to go forth, not to one mission only, but to all the missions over all the earth that she might evangelize the whole world for Christ. She wished to labor not in one undertaking only, but in all; not for one period of time alone, but through its entire course. These desires, set on fire from the very flames of the Heart of Jesus, became a real agony for her. Then it was that her Divine Spouse, who had inspired them, showed her how it would be possible for her to realize them all. For her vocation would be *love,* and love embraces all vocations:

"I understood that since the Church is a body composed of different members, the noblest and most important of all the organs could not be wanting. I knew that the Church has a heart, that this heart burns with love, and that it is love which gives life to its members. I knew that if this love were extinguished the Apostles would no longer preach the Gospel,

and the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood.

"I understood that love embraces all vocations, that it is all things, and that it reaches out through all the ages, and to the uttermost limits of the earth, because it is eternal.

"Then, beside myself with joy, I cried out: 'O Jesus, my Love, at last I have found my vocation. My vocation is love! Yes, I have found my place in the bosom of the Church, and this place, O my God, Thou hast Thyself given me: in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be Love! . . . Thus I shall be all things; thus will my desires be realized.' "

The passage from which this is quoted is doubtless one of the sublimest in the whole range of literature. It is written out of the very Heart of Christ. To others that Heart might speak in visions, to her He spoke in the silence and secrecy of her own heart, revealing the mysteries of His Love.

Yet in spite of all the greatness and intensity of her affection, she was not satisfied that she could love Jesus as He should be loved, unless indeed He would give her His own

Heart to love Him with. Ardently she exclaimed:

"A thousand hearts too few would be for my desire,
Give me *Thy* Heart to set my longing heart on fire!"

Precisely the same thought appears again when she puts upon the lips of St. Mary Magdalen the words that are but the expression of her own zeal for the cause of God and the salvation of souls.

"O, with what ardent zeal
My heart at last doth burn;
What deep desire I feel
To give Thy love return!
Yet souls to win for Thee
Too weak, too blind am I;
Lend Thou Thy Heart to me,
None then shall pass me by."

Nothing less, therefore, could satisfy her than the Heart of Jesus to love Him with and to win souls with for Him.

But what pleased her most was the "loving audacity" with which St. Mary Magdalen won

the Heart of Christ. St. Teresa's own love was nothing if not daring, and we can readily therefore understand her admiration for the great Penitent who was so intimate a favorite of Christ. "Above all," she writes, "I follow Magdalen, for the amazing, rather I should say the loving, audacity that delights the Heart of Jesus has cast its spell upon mine."

And be it noted here that it was not because she had been preserved from mortal sin that the Little Flower lifted up her head to God in love and trust. It should indeed be most consoling to timorous souls and profoundly encouraging even to the most criminal, who yet wish to return to their Saviour's arms of mercy, to read on this point the words of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus:

"I feel that even had I on my conscience every crime one could commit, I should lose nothing of my confidence. My heart broken with sorrow, I would throw myself into the arms of my Saviour. I know that he loves the Prodigal, I have His words to Mary Magdalen . . . No one could frighten me away, for I know what to believe concerning His Mercy and Love."

Surely, to have written these sentiments was to have understood in all perfection the Sacred Heart of Our Saviour. "I know," she adds, "that all that multitude of sins would disappear in an instant, even as a drop of water cast into a flaming furnace."

What is that furnace but the Sacred Heart, in which all these crimes might in a moment be forgiven and forgotten, like the sins of the Magdalen? How that Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist must have thrilled with joy at the approach of the Little Flower, coming to Him with such unquestioning love, in her own "little way" that He had taught her: the way of spiritual childhood, of trust and of absolute self-surrender to all the desires of His Sacred Heart!

CHAPTER XII

WINNING JESUS THROUGH HIS HEART

ROOTED and abloom was the Little Flower in the Sacred Heart. Thence she drew her sweetness and her beauty. Of that Heart she felt a great and inexpressible need. It alone, she knew, could respond to all her wishes.

Her own heart yearned, she tells us, to spend itself for others. She was, as it were, under an impulse to prove her tenderness by deeds. Her whole being was goodness, a reflection of the Divine and uncreated Goodness that was constantly operative in her soul. But who, she asked herself, would be able to understand her desires, her longings, her strivings? Who would be able to give her a return of love which could wholly satisfy her boundless cravings:

"And yet what heart can my heart comprehend?
What heart will always love me without end?"

There was one answer to these questions, an answer she well understood. God had made her heart for Himself, and in Him only could it rest. Long before her time the great Augustine had voiced these selfsame thoughts. There was one Heart only, here below, that could fully comprehend her own, could satisfy its longings and love it without ceasing, and that Heart was even then beating with love for her in the Holy Eucharist.

Beautifully she dwells upon these thoughts in her poem "To the Sacred Heart," where she thus sets forth her profound need of a love such as the world cannot give her, and offers the one perfect answer to her ceaseless cravings:

"A heart I need to soothe me and to bless,
A strong support that cannot pass away,
To love me wholly, e'en my feebleness,
And never leave me through the night and day.
There is not one created thing below
Can love me truly and can never die,
God become man, none else, my needs can know,
He, He alone, can understand my cry.

"Thou comprehendest all I need, dear Lord!
To win my heart, from Heaven thou didst come;
For me Thy blood didst shed, O King adored!
And on our altars makest now Thy home.
So, if I may not here behold Thy Face,
Or catch the heavenly music of Thy voice,
I still can live each moment by Thy grace,
And in Thy Sacred Heart I can rejoice.

"O Heart of Jesus, wealth of tenderness,
My joy Thou art, in Thee I safely hide;
Thou, who my earliest youth didst charm and bless,
Till my last evening, O, with me abide!
All that I had to Thee I wholly gave,
To Thee each deep desire of mine is known,
Whoso his life shall lose that life shall save—
Let mine be ever lost in Thine alone!

"I know it well, no righteousness of mine
Hath any value in Thy searching eyes;
Its every breath my heart must draw from Thine
To make of worth my life's long sacrifice.
Thou hast not found Thine angels without taint,
Thy Law amid the thunderbolts were given,
And yet, my Jesus, I nor fear nor faint,
For me on Calvary Thy Heart was riven!"

Particular attention should be called to the concluding stanza, with the remarkable thought contained in it. We have admired her Divine philosophy of Love, but here we have a practical application. It shows us the mighty power of that love, as Christ Himself has revealed it. In order constantly to renew the purity of our souls, what more is necessary than to sink ourselves into the Sacred Heart? There its fires of love will ever again cleanse away our faults in the flames of Divine charity and at last enable us by one great act of love at the hour of our death, to enter Heaven itself without any need of Purgatory.

Expressed in plainest terms, it was the purpose of the Little Flower, by God's grace, to make her own the love that burns in the Sacred Heart. By her repeated acts of love she could purge away all imperfections and even the effects of them, because nothing is so purifying as Divine charity. That final truth is her great central thesis. No matter what her failings may have been, she knows that an act of love can again make everything good with the Good God. Here is all this theology put into song by her:

"To see Thee in Thy glory, face to face,
I know it well, the soul must pass through fires.
Choose I *on earth* my purgatorial place,
The flaming love of Thy great Heart's desires.
So shall my exiled soul to death's command
Make answer with one cry of perfect love,
Then flying straight to Heaven, its fatherland,
Shall reach with no delay that home above."

Those last words were literally fulfilled in her regard. Who has not been thrilled with that "one cry of perfect love" wherewith she made answer, at "death's command!" The final words with which she died are familiar to all. With such words upon our lips, or in our hearts, we too desire to render up our souls to God when that last moment comes for each of us: "O! . . . I love Him! . . . My God, I . . . love . . . Thee!"

"These," we are told, "were her last words. She had scarcely uttered them when, to our great surprise, she sank down quite suddenly, her head inclined a little to the right in the attitude of the Virgin Martyrs offering themselves to the sword; or rather as a Victim of

Love, awaiting from the Divine Archer the fiery shaft by which she longs to die."

Once more she fixed her eyes, shining with unutterable happiness and peace, a little above the statue of Our Lady, and so she died, the Victim of Divine Love. To repeat her own words: "Flying straight to Heaven, its fatherland," her soul reached without delay "that home above," whereof she had so often and so ardently sung. To the very letter every word of her song had been fulfilled in her own regard, and on the Heart of Jesus she could now take ecstatic rest.

Yet not such would be her rest as to prevent her from at once beginning after death her great mission upon earth which henceforth would be to teach men her "little way" of spiritual childhood, of trust and absolute self-abandonment—to make them love her Jesus as she had loved Him here below. If she could not now continue her work for souls, the Little Flower deliberately stated, she would prefer exile to home, earth to Heaven. Her great desire was that she might still labor to make God loved. He had accepted the sacrifice of her youthful life precisely that she might accom-

plish her mission after death. Only when the last trumpet had sounded and time was no more would she cease in her efforts to "do good upon earth." Surely the zeal of the Sacred Heart had here found its perfect expression in the heart of this little Victim of His Love.

How, then, shall we regard the Little Flower if not as a masterpiece of the love of the Sacred Heart, as she was also the child of the Divine grace procured for her by the purest Heart of Mary through whose intercession all graces come to us, and whom few could ever love as St. Teresa loved her. Like Mary, her wisdom lay in winning the Heart of God by her littleness and love.

"*To make Jesus captive through His Heart*," that is the winsome way she teaches us, and wonderfully she herself succeeded in this supreme art.

"*To win Jesus by a caress*," that was her method of approach to His Heart.

Alluding to the Canticle of Canticles, she asks how anyone can possibly fear Him who so easily allows Himself to be made captive by us, "with one single hair of our neck." By telling us that a single hair can work this

"Mine is Thy Face; mine is Thy Heart;
Lo, I am wounded by Thy dart!"

wonder, she explains in a letter to her sister Leonie, Our Divine Lord would have us understand that "the smallest actions done for His love are those which charm His Heart." Not our little sacrifices only, but our joys as well, offered with this motive, can never fail to make Him "captive through His Heart." Instead of yielding ourselves up to purely selfish happiness in our enjoyments, we need merely "offer to our Spouse the little joys He scatters in our path in order to charm our hearts and draw them towards Him." Such is her wise counsel.

"O, how good Jesus is, how tender and loving!" she exclaims on another occasion. "How easy it is to reach His Heart!" Need we marvel then that Jesus heeded even her least silent and unexpressed desires? In this regard, too, she greatly admired the Magdalen because she had fathomed in a wonderful way "that abyss of love and mercy, the Heart of Jesus."

"When I see Mary Magdalen come forth before all Simon's guests," she writes, "to wash with her tears her Master's feet, those feet that for the first time she touches, I feel her heart has fathomed that abyss of love and mercy, the Heart of Jesus; and I feel, too, that not only

was He willing to forgive, but even liberally to dispense the favors of a Divine and intimate friendship, and to raise her to the loftiest heights of prayer."

Gratefully she recalls the Father Confessor who launched her, full sail, upon that ocean of confidence and love on which she had longed to advance, but previously had not dared to set out. It was the same Confessor who told her that her little faults were such as in reality not to pain the Good God.

"I had never been told before that it was possible for faults not to pain the Sacred Heart," she writes. "The assurance filled me with joy, and helped me to bear with patience the exile of this life. It was also the echo of my innermost thoughts." Could anything be more delicate than this care "*not to pain the Sacred Heart?*" Never, indeed, would she knowingly have failed to do the most loving will of that Divine Heart, and so how could she have caused it pain?

But much further than this did the Little Flower go in what we may call her courtesies of love towards the Sacred Heart.

Strikingly in conformity with the revela-

tions made to St. Margaret Mary, and evidently independent of them because so intimately a part of her own theology of the Sacred Heart, is the statement of the Little Flower that: "The Heart of Jesus is more grieved by the thousand little imperfections of His friends than by the faults, even grave, which His enemies commit." It was precisely the ingratitude of souls consecrated to Him of which the Sacred Heart complained most feelingly to St. Margaret Mary. But nevertheless that Divine Heart has boundless patience with those who really try to better themselves in spite of their faults.

"His Heart," wrote the Little Flower, to one of her Brother Missionaries, "thrills with joy when He has to deal with those who truly love, and who after each little fault come to fling themselves into His arms, imploring forgiveness. He says to His angels what the Prodigal's father said to his servants: *'Put a ring upon his finger, and let us rejoice.'* O Brother, *verily the Divine Heart's goodness and merciful love are little known!"*

It is true, she adds, that one must humble himself and confess his nothingness to enjoy

these treasures of the Sacred Heart, "and here it is that many a soul draws back."

Has anyone written more wisely and profoundly, more delightfully and tenderly of the Sacred Heart than this little Saint? And is it not a beautiful and just dispensation of the Divine Heart that all the world should now love her who during life loved her God so wisely and so well?

Promoting devotion to the Little Flower is in reality promoting in a most practical manner the love of God in the hearts of men. It is to provide, with the aid of Divine grace, that Jesus may receive in fullest measure that love for which His Heart craves. And who could have longed more to satisfy that Divine thirst than the Little Flower? "To love Jesus and to make Him loved," was her one motto, while her whole heart was captured in turn by the love which she knew Jesus had for her, and for all of us as well.

"His love for us," she tells us of Our dear Lord, "makes Him actually blind." If the greatest sinner on earth "should repent at the moment of death and draw his last breath in an act of love," as she explains, Our Lord

would fail to see his crimes and lovingly receive him into the arms of His Mercy. "But to make Him thus blind, *we must approach Him through His Heart.*" There is the secret of the Little Flower. She knew how always to approach Jesus by way of His Heart, and that Divine Heart worked wonders for her. Yet let us remember too it was by Mary she found her way to the Heart of Jesus.

Her love for Jesus was a disinterested love. It was not dependent upon spiritual sweetness. It was a love that was practised amid almost constant aridity, desolation, suffering, or even the very greatest trials of body and of soul. Yet it was precisely her joy to be able thus to show her affection when less faithful souls might simply complain that they could not love at all. Even in moments when prayer itself had become physically impossible, her heart could still love.

Not only did the love of the Little Flower continue under the most distressing circumstances, and in her greatest agonies of soul and body, but she would not even, as it were, let Jesus know that she was suffering. Her principle was that souls consecrated to Him

should on no account ever show Him a mournful face. This indeed was one of the most delicate of her courtesies of love towards the Sacred Heart.

"Our Divine Master," she said, "has only our monasteries where He may obtain some solace for His Heart. He comes to us in search of rest to forget the unceasing complaints of His friends in the world, who instead of appreciating the value of the Cross receive it far more often with moans and tears." Not, of course, that she failed to realize there was great heroism in the world also, but in regard to Religious, at all events, she held: "It is for us to console Our Lord, and not for Him to console us." As she expressed it to one of her novices: "His Heart is so tender" that were His little bride to weep before Him He would surely dry her tears, but then He Himself would go away sad, because He had failed to find a tranquil repose within her: "Tell Him gaily that you are happy to suffer for Him." Such was the heroic love of the Little Flower.

Amid all the trials of life she knew but one way of greeting her Jesus, and that was with a smile. The greater her suffering, the sweeter

was her smile. Such was her delicate consideration for the Heart of her Spouse. Let us not, then, think that after death she has forgotten the interests of that Sacred Heart.

One of the most charming instances to illustrate this can be found in the volume, *Shower of Roses upon the Missions*, issued by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In it is contained a letter dated March 4, 1921, and written to Lisieux from Pella, South Africa, by Sister Frances Teresa. The Little Flower, it will be seen, scatters her favors impartially over all the earth. Our missionary Sister writes:

"We have just received a touching favor from Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus. Our little children have a special devotion to the Sacred Heart, and they save the most beautiful flowers to decorate the Sacred Heart altar. One day when they wished particularly to beautify it, they wanted to use roses, but alas! where could they obtain them? The only rose-bush in the convent garden was a dried and withered one, which for six years had not produced a single blossom. I said to the children: 'Why not tell Sister Teresa of your

difficulty? She and roses are good friends, and perhaps she will help you out.'

"The children took me at my word, and began a novena with roses for the object. On the seventh day of the novena, to the joyful amazement of the Community as well as of the children, four buds appeared on the sterile rosebush. They developed very rapidly into beautiful roses of various colors.

"For three weeks flowers continued to appear and their petals were of a tint and delicacy beyond any I had seen. And the roses were of an altogether different variety from those formerly grown on that bush! And the bush itself has become vigorous again since this marvel occurred."

What gifts, then, will not the Little Flower obtain for us, through Mary's intercession, from the Sacred Heart—she at whose prayer even the dry rosebush blooms into beauty with flowers no earthly gardener could rear. Gifts for body and for soul she has everywhere scattered in utmost abundance over this wide earth of ours, but dearest of all her gifts are the roses of Divine Love. For this, we have seen, is her work to the end of time: to make men

love the Good God even as she loved Him, and to teach them her "little way" that leads straight to the Heart of God, the way of spiritual childhood, of trust and absolute self-surrender to the God who Himself is Charity—Divine Love.

The popular picture, painted by her sister Celine, and familiar to us all, presents her with a large, fair rose, held out in her left hand. Her right hand lovingly clasps the crucifix, wound round with roses. And what is the great red rose she offers, but the dearest of all her favors?

Like her, and like the Christ she holds in her embrace, she would have us also become Victims of Divine Love. And how, indeed, can we answer more perfectly the pleadings of the Heart of Jesus from the silence of His Tabernacle, than by her own sweet Act of Oblation, made not with the lips only, but faithfully observed in all our lives? Into this brief Act has passed all the beauty of her spirit. It is of all her roses the richest and the fairest. It is love in the heart of the creature making answer to Love in the Heart of God.

THE LITTLE FLOWER'S ACT OF OBLATION

"In order that my life may be one act of perfect love, I offer myself as a Victim of Holocaust to Thy Merciful Love, imploring Thee to consume me unceasingly, and to allow the floods of infinite tenderness gathered up in Thee to overflow into my soul, that so I may become a very martyr of Thy Love, O my God! May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear in Thy Presence, free me from this life at the last, and may my soul take its flight—without delay—into the eternal embrace of Thy Merciful Love!

"O my Beloved, I desire at every beat of my heart to renew this Oblation an infinite number of times, 'till the shadows retire,' and everlastingly I can tell Thee my love face to face."

PRINTED BY BENZIGER BROTHERS, NEW YORK

8312 248.159.22 H77

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